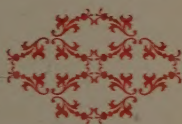


AUMLA

*Journal of the Australasian Universities
Language and Literature Association*

COMPLIMENTARY NUMBER
OFFERED AS A TRIBUTE
TO
A. R. CHISHOLM



NUMBER TEN MAY 1959

AUMLA

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(AFFILIATED WITH THE F.I.L.L.M.)

*Formerly the Australasian Universities Modern
Languages Association*

A JOURNAL OF LITERARY CRITICISM, PHILOLOGY & LINGUISTICS

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FOREWORD

THIS number of *AUMLA* is offered as a tribute to Professor A. R. Chisholm, to whom chiefly the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association owes its foundation in 1950. Professor Chisholm was Head of the Department of French in the University of Melbourne for a period of thirty-six years, from 1921 to 1956, and retired from the Chair of French at the close of the academic year 1956, at the age of 68.

During 1956 and 1957 tentative plans were made by a group of former students and colleagues of his to publish in book form a series of contributions to learning offered in his honour by a panel of people chosen for their close contact with 'Le Patron'. These, and others of the 'anciens', sponsored the project in a practical way by guaranteeing a considerable proportion of the costs of publication. After certain delays and negotiations it finally seemed to the organizing committee most appropriate that the material offered for publication in this way should appear in print as a complimentary number of the Journal of the learned Association he had done so much to foster.

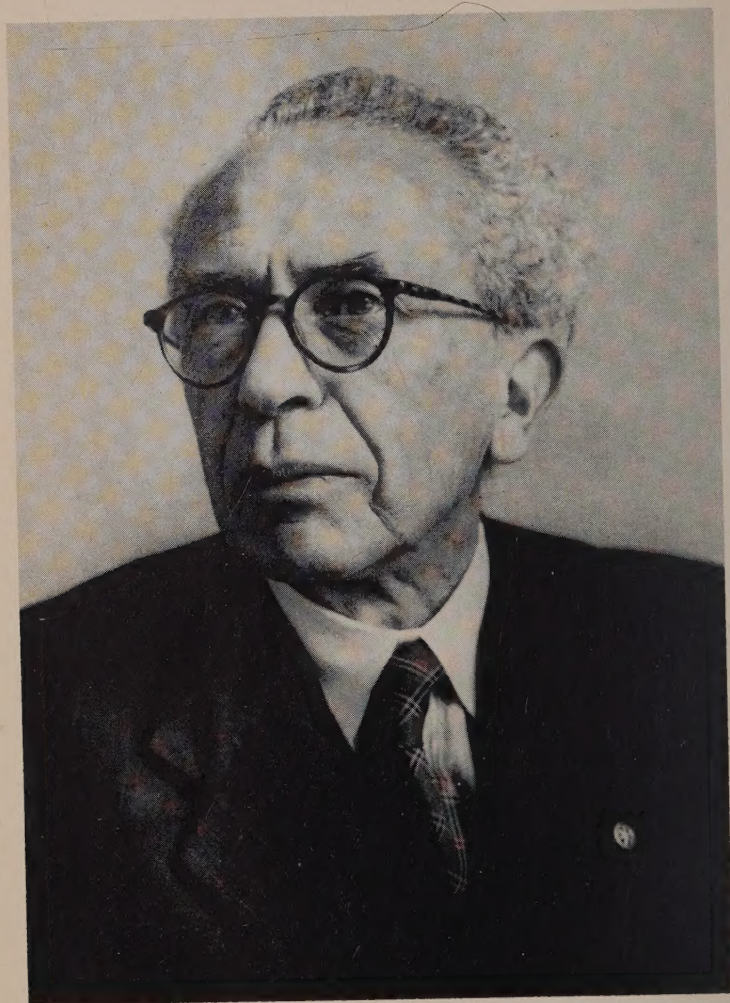
In any Antipodean university the head of a Department devoted to the study of a living European language needs to inhabit two worlds. Professor Chisholm had his roots deep in European, especially Latin, tradition, and devoted his best scholarship to that late fruit of a mature civilization, the Symbolist movement in French poetry. He was also, by birth, the inheritor of a far more recent Australian tradition, and lent wise and sympathetic support to creative writing in a young literature struggling to pass from adolescence to maturity. In both traditions he moved with ease, as one belonging there.

For other things, too, he will be cherished by those who, having sat at his feet as students, later were privileged to serve under him as colleagues. Like Berengar of Tours recalling the beloved master Fulbert of Chartres and his *vespertina colloquia* in the chapel garden, they will remember his kindness of judgment and tolerance of student immaturities, the complete trust he gave his staff and the generous loyalty with which he defended them, his philosophic calm under stress or provocation, his breadth and humanity, and the vast sweep of a richly equipped mind unceasingly active in quest of new learning. For these and many other things he deserves to be remembered of us.

R.T.S.

Parve libelle tuum nostrumque require magistrum
cuius virtutes nos celebrare libet.
semper enim nobis fuit ille fidelis amicus
atque exempla dedit mille sequenda suis.
verba poetarum pernovit temporis acti,
atque subinde iocis forma Latina datur.
nec quisquam scriptis Europae doctior illo,
et patriae nostrae carmina digna fovet.
heu! tamen est tempus vale dicere triste, patrone:
iamque diu maneant otia grata tibi.

Iris Wilcock
University of Melbourne



By courtesy of the *Herald*, Melbourne

AUMLA

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NO. 10 MAY 1959

*Complimentary number offered as a tribute to
Professor A. R. Chisholm*

A. R. CHISHOLM

JAMES R. LAWLER

ALAN ROWLAND CHISHOLM was born at Bathurst on the sixth of November 1888. Until the age of ten he lived in the New South Wales countryside, moving with his parents to a small farm at Minore, just beyond Dubbo, in 1894. These were heroic times for primary education, and Alan Chisholm did not have any formal schooling before the age of ten, when he went to Milson's Point Public School in North Sydney. Here he spent a few years until, learning that the headmaster of North Sydney Superior Public School (Greenwood) taught some Latin to his pupils, he transferred to that school in 1902. He began in the Upper Third, worked his way up, and in about eighteen months reached Greenwood's class where he obtained the elements of Latin, as well as an enthusiasm for trigonometry. At the same time he began to receive lessons after school in elementary French from a master who knew the basic grammar, if not the pronunciation.

In 1905 he went to Fort Street where the excellent Latinist A. J. Kilgour made a deep impression. He forged ahead in Latin and French, even reading Juvenal in the Public Library; and at the end of 1906 he was offered a pupil teachership at William Street Public School. He remained for one year, preparing simultaneously the Senior Public and the entrance examination for the Teachers' College. He matriculated at the end of 1907.

The years 1908 to 1910 were spent at the Teachers' College and the University of Sydney, where he studied French under G. G. Nicholson and Latin with 'Tommy' Butler. At the March examin-

ation of 1911 he graduated with the top first in Latin, equal top first in French and a second class in philosophy.

For the next year he served as first assistant at the District Public School in Glen Innes; but, early in 1912, leaving Glen Innes and Australia with the Education Department's travelling scholarship, he went to Berlin to learn German at the Institute founded by the gifted Australian Professor Tilly. That same year he passed Wilhelm Viëtor's examination for the German diploma of the International Phonetic Association with first-class honours; then, in Paris, he continued his wide reading, attended various courses at the Sorbonne, and also received the French Diploma of the International Phonetics Association (under Paul Passy). Before returning to Australia he put in another brief period in Germany, at Leipzig, in early 1914.

On his return to Sydney Alan Chisholm was appointed lecturer in French and German at the Teachers' College, and the following year took over the second and third year prose classes at the University. But this was 1915, and the Education Department gave him leave to enlist in the A.I.F. at the end of that year. He served in France, mainly on Listening Posts. Toward the end of the war and for some time after the armistice he was education and repatriation officer for the 26th Battalion.

In the second half of 1919 he returned to his position at the Teachers' College, assuming his former duties as well as editing one of the pioneer journals of language studies in Australia, the *Modern Language Review of New South Wales*, which appeared at quarterly intervals between January 1920 and early 1921. 'Our Review,' wrote the editor, 'must stand for revolution in its milder and more constructive aspect—Reform'; and he paid particular attention to discussing the teaching of literature. He found it encumbered by 'many fetiches' that 'have been passed on to us from Europe, and duly and reverently worshipped': most tenacious perhaps was literary history: 'the history of literature has been an idol, and its temple has been a rigid examination system leaving no room for imagination.' Alongside a series of articles by Christopher Brennan we observe Alan Chisholm developing an 'intrinsic' approach to (among other writers) Heredia, whose work had already attracted him before the outbreak of the war.

In March 1921 he took over the French Department in the University of Melbourne with the title of Independent Lecturer. There was at that time only one French assistant on the staff, the late Théophile Rouel, but the following year Monsieur N. Karageusian joined the staff and began his long period of service and fruitful co-operation with Chisholm. About the same time Mon-

sieur F. (Freddy) Callil became tutor. It was not until some ten years later that the staff was increased by the appointment as lecturer of the present Professor of French in the University of Adelaide, Mr J. G. Cornell. In 1930 Alan Chisholm became Associate Professor and finally (when a Chair of French was established in 1938) Professor, a position he held until his retirement in 1956.

The teaching and administrative loads that Professor Chisholm undertook were always heavy; but with astounding constancy throughout his career he managed to publish learned articles in journals of Australia and Europe. The difficulties of carrying on research in Australia into questions of modern literature were especially great thirty years ago. He overcame them with an original critical attitude, breadth of background, and an authoritative style. His first book appeared in 1930: *The Art of Arthur Rimbaud*. Strange to say, this remains one of the few attempts to examine the work of Rimbaud, not from the point of view of the apologist, but of the literary critic whose concern is primarily with the poetic substance. An interesting sidelight on the value of this study is that a French university professor, writing in 1954, took as the starting-point for his significant article on *Le Bateau ivre* some of Professor Chisholm's remarks in this early book (see 'Le sous-marin ivre de Rimbaud', *Revue des sciences humaines*, 1954).

Four years later appeared *Towards Hérodiade*, which set out to explain French poetry of the nineteenth century 'not as mere chronological events but as organic developments'. Professor Chisholm saw in the writers he was discussing (principally Leconte de Lisle, Baudelaire, Rimbaud, Heredia, Mallarmé) an attempt to 'break down the plastic structure of the universe' which revealed 'behind phenomena, first an immense and incessant flux, and then a sheer void'. It was thus a study in Romantic nihilism, emphasizing the importance of such influences as the Germanic and the Hindu, and resuming the various traits of nineteenth century poetry around the foci of musicalisation, Dionysism, occultism, correspondences, angelism. Implicit throughout was the humanist's rejection of disillusion and the 'sterile heritage' that the century had left to thought. The thesis was daring, while the remarks on particular authors and their works cannot fail to strike the reader as penetrating and extraordinarily original. In addition, a poet's sensibility interweaves the different currents of the book like an artistic composition until their final synthesis in Mallarmé's *Hérodiade*.

In 1938, after his return from a year's leave in Europe, Professor Chisholm published what is perhaps his most brilliant essay: *An Approach to M. Valéry's 'Jeune Parque'*. It was one of the first

full-scale readings of *La Jeune Parque*, and patiently, delicately, followed the beautiful pattern that Valéry had composed. One major originality was the critic's division, for purposes of exegesis, of the 512 lines into sections, or islands, just as Valéry had once provisionally entitled his poem 'Iles'. Here is the meditation of the *Parque* caught in its organic flow as a sequence of interconnected states of human consciousness, from the first lonely moment of sadness to its exultant close.

But Professor Chisholm has not devoted his labours to French literature alone. With a sense of perspective that is far from common in Australian criticism, he has written many an article on our own poetry, especially the work of Chris Brennan, whom we recognize today as a pioneer in the search for an Australian poetic idiom. In 1946 he published a monograph on his former friend and then spent long years collating and editing Brennan's complete writings.

So much for the scholarly publications. Few of his friends realize however that Professor Chisholm has himself written a good deal of poetry. A few examples have appeared from time to time in literary reviews, but these have rarely been the most characteristic. The real tone of his work is intimate, with simple rhythms and images that sing without effort and often recapture the movement of the traditional ballads.

Literary critic, philosopher, linguist, poet; above all, perhaps, the most sympathetic and inspiring of teachers—and we have not exhausted Professor Chisholm's interests and gifts. He indeed figures among those humanists who have brought to their pursuits, as well as to the ordinary intercourse of human relationships, a depth of learning, a warm generosity, a charity that only the spiritually rich possess.

PROFESSOR A. R. CHISHOLM

ALFRED STIRLING

Australian Embassy, Paris

I had the honour of being in 'la première classe'. It was a summer evening back in 1921 in one of the upper rooms of the old Arts building. The new Professor from Sydney (extremely young, although his only-slightly younger students did not fully realise this at first) came like an electric shock. At once he opened up wide fields. I have no doubt that art was concealing art, but it seemed to me then that he was pouring new suggestions into our laps with pell-mell exuberance.

Two of his earliest lectures were on 'L'Affaire': he made the characters of the Dreyfus case come alive as if he were producing a play.

Another of the many surprises in his early lectures was 'La Dame aux Camélias': this after we had long been sated with the dry dust of Brunetière and the minor literary critics of 1900.

Then came an intensive study of Baudelaire, Verlaine, Mallarmé, Valéry.

In every direction he opened up something new. There was a quality of excitement in the air. Soon he was organising a dramatic club and staging 'On ne badine pas avec l'amour'. There were nights in the 'gods' at the theatres with conversation confined to French and all kinds of informal exchanges.

All this was entirely new to the teaching of French in the University, sound as it had been in the past, and it was soon to raise the School of French to that high eminence, and popularity, which it has had ever since.

My reminiscences stop short because, alas, I left the French School at the end of Professor Chisholm's first year.

In the thirty odd years since then I have often had cause to be grateful to him for what he has ever given so generously, and I have found others echoing this in many different cities in the world.

One echo about the man himself. Some 25 years ago, I was trying to get into the United States from Canada, and got held up with a lost passport at a frontier town. Clearly hours of delay at the very least were involved and I found myself waiting in a long queue in an over-worked consulate. When my application, containing the word Melbourne, went through, the Consul at once appeared saying excitedly: 'Who is this from Melbourne?' and then, 'Tell me, can you give me any news of Alan Chisholm?' When I told him I had

been Professor Chisholm's pupil, he at once led me into his office saying: 'I was in school with Alan.' (School meant post-graduate research in Paris just after the armistice of the First World War). My passport difficulties were over within thirty seconds.

It is a hopeless task to put down in cold print for anyone who does not know him the enthusiasm with which Professor Chisholm fires his pupils and his friends.

'You have not been under the wand of the magician.'

A LETTER FROM LONDON

London, 15 July, 1957

My dear Alan,

A grey English day darkens outside my windows as I write, but the air is mild, the trees are green against the white walls of the houses opposite, and regularly a great splash of scarlet slides past as a bus thunders along this South Kensington street. Summer in London, with all the pleasures it has to offer—the unpredictable mixture of sunshine and sudden shower, the soft yet lively colours of park and square, the terraces gay with fresh paint and flower boxes, the barrows of glowing fruit, the well-behaved crowds in which these days the dark skins of Africans and West Indians contrast so frequently and effectively with the native white, the historic streets and buildings, the theatres and the music . . . And here I am, on leave from Melbourne University, and only too ready to admit that one of the greatest pleasures is to forget my work there and live a lazy existence of mere self-gratification.

But that, of course, is impossible. Constantly my mind turns towards Australia and my good friends and colleagues back home. for part of the pleasure of one's own experiences is the relating of them to a background of imaginary sharing. Over and over again one thinks, 'X would have enjoyed this', or 'I must write to Y and tell him about this', or 'How fortunate I am that Z prepared me for this'. So it's not surprising that, many times during the months I have spent in a part of London resonant with the clash of tongues, I have thought of you and the benefits I have received from your teaching and your friendship.

As far as the former is concerned there are others more qualified

A Letter from London

to speak. for I, as a student of English literature, could give only a little time to the treasures of French; but in that little time I was lucky to be guided by you and Nazar Karagheusian, and what I learnt will remain with me always.

Can you take your mind back to 1923? That was my first year at the University, and Jim Cornell, now Professor of French at Adelaide, and I came up with a group of boys from Scotch, all agog for the excitements of an academic education. Probably we considered ourselves very sophisticated as we roamed the grounds, still fairly rural-looking with the islanded lake and avenue of Moreton Bay fig-trees—not yet the hermaphroditic horror of the Commerce Building—and as we discussed, interminably and seriously, the problems of life and art and our own futures. But I sometimes feel we were naïve in comparison with the young of to-day, primed with advantages and shaken with anxieties that we never envisaged. For those were peaceful years, and the University was small and intimate, its classes held in all sorts of out-of-the-way corners and its staff housed in cupboard-like rooms up narrow stair-cases. The Arts Building, whose gingerbread Neo-Gothic splendours now seem antiquated in face of functional ‘Babel’, had yet to be completed, and your French lectures were given in a room which has long vanished amongst the racks and galleries of the Library. There at nine in the morning—oh, that early start from the suburbs on cold winter days!—you revealed to us the ordered beauty of the language and its literature; and though my interest was not whole-hearted, caught up as I was with the different delights of English and the difficulty of absorbing enough German for Part I—not to mention the bewildering mysteries of that hybrid subject. Psychology, Logic and Ethics—the compulsive enthusiasm of your teaching was such that I slid easily into second-year Honours work. There, I confess, the emphasis on the preachers and philosophers of the 17th and 18th centuries somewhat damped my ardour, and I have never been able to regard the words ‘Port Royal’ with marked affection. But what I learnt in those two years has stuck, and so have the memories of incidental pleasures of my studies—the discovery of new words and the growing confidence in the use of them, the telegrams we used to compose in French on chosen letters of the alphabet, the learning of a sonnet for my first-year oral. And I can see you now at that oral, sitting in your room somewhere not far from the present bookshop, and calmly and kindly putting me at my ease as I nervously gulped out the fourteen lines in which Heredia extolled the magnificence of Cleopatra—a typical choice for an eighteen year old, ardent for colour at any price.

Our ways parted at the end of my second year until I returned in 1936 from Cambridge, and we met as colleagues. You were Professor Chisholm and I was a very junior lecturer, full, no doubt, of the self-importance of youthful plans and opinions, but your friendship and support were at once given, and it was not long before you were Alan to me, as I was Keith to you. And so it has remained for twenty years of work together for the Humanities, though in different Schools—and long may it be so.

During these years we have faced each other at Faculty meetings and on committees, and I have always been struck by the width of your knowledge, the tolerance of your outlook, and the depth of your understanding of human relations. I have seen you in troubles, both academic and private, and admired your patience in difficulties, and the courage of your firmly-held convictions. Perhaps the greatest tribute to your success as a University man is the affection in which you have been held by your staff. To have your Senior Lecturer voluntarily accompany you into retirement is a feather in your cap, though one not desired by yourself, and the sorrow of your other colleagues at their Professorial loss was clear for all to see.

But there—you will be with us in some capacity for many years to come, I trust. And I shall look forward, on my return, to meeting you again on my Saturday morning shopping in Toorak village. There we stand for a few moments, two middle-aged academic males, burdened with baskets or the ubiquitous string-bag-badger of contemporary domestic servitude—to discuss the latest University development and then hurry off to collect the rest of our week-end nourishment. Yes, the crowded street is always brightened by the sight of your small figure sturdily marching towards me, arms laden with bread, meat, and vegetables, and a Toorak shopping excursion would seem incomplete without our encounter. . .

All these experiences, then—all these memories of you as a teacher and a man,—have helped to form my appreciation of life and letters, and here in Kensington, where the sounds of the French language so often ring out in street or café as students gather over cups of coffee or the girls and boys of a local Lycée pass by, it is no wonder that I have thought many times of you. My spoken French is rusty these days, but I can readily understand it, and as I shamelessly listen in to the conversation of the young, my mind returns to various sojourns in Paris—to lectures at the Sorbonne in grimy, badly ventilated rooms, to meals in Left Bank restaurants with the Cornells and discussions as to whether we could afford a really interesting wine, to our little hotel in the Rue Gay-Lussac with the Siamese cat that was so 'frileux', to the evenings in Mont-

A Letter from London

martre or Montparnasse when the talk went on for hours and energy was unbounded . . . ah, *où sont les neiges d'antan?* . . .

Yet now and then Paris seems to come close again. To-day, for instance, I wandered into Soho and discovered that London's 'Continental quarter' was *en fête* with its annual fair. The little shops were bright with bunting and the tricolour of France; bearded artist-types were selling programmes in the streets; there was the sound of singing and skiffle groups; beneath the tower of bombed St Anne's a large mechanical clock produced a series of whimsical figures at quarter-hour intervals; merry-go-rounds and side-shows added their din; and a boulangerie was exhibiting new-baked bread in the shapes of a triumphal arch, a sheaf of wheatears, and a typical, dog-desired lamp-post. All the ingredients of a Parisian street-fair were there, even to the chatter in French around me—though mixed, I must admit, with voluble Italian and more phlegmatic comments in honest Cockney.

So, back beyond these glimpses and those Parisian memories my thoughts roam to the preparation for all this pleasure in our studies with you. And I remembered you, too, some months ago as I watched and listened to the famous Edwige Feuillère in her assault upon the histrionic peaks of Racine's *Phèdre*. Not a theatrical conquest-of-Everest, I regret to say, for the elegant actress, accomplished in movement as she is, and dressed to almost incredible perfection, failed to convey the passion-racked torment of the Amazonian queen. Here was a twentieth-century lady who had strayed by accident into the emotional depths of neo-classical tragedy. Still, there was the formal beauty of the play to admire, and the magnificent sweep of Racine's alexandrines—and once again I realized how much my appreciation was heightened by a knowledge gained from you.

Will you then accept these words of gratitude from an erstwhile student, a colleague and a friend, sent to you from the other side of the world? This is a letter of random memories, some half-obscured by time, some so sharply etched that they will remain as enduring as my affection for you. And that this affection may have many opportunities for its expression in the years to come is the wish of—

Your sincere friend,

Keith Macartney

EINE BESCHEIDENE WIDMUNG

HILDE BURGER

Und es gab viele Lehrer, aber nur wenige, die mit Recht den Namen Meister verdienten, er aber war es im höchsten Masse.

EINE Welt war zusammengestürzt. Es hatte Warnungszeichen gegeben, aber man hatte sie nicht beachtet. Das Leben mitten im Volke 'der Phäaken' war zu schön, zu anregend und reich an Wundern und Erlebnissen, die alles andere vergessen liessen.

Und dann rumpelten die schweren Panzerwagen gegen Norden und wieder wollte man nicht die Folgen ermessen. Viel Unrecht geschah, aber der Leichtsinn überredete einen ohne Mühe in die Wahnvorstellung hinein, es würde nun ein schöneres, ein grösseres Reich gegründet, besser und vollkommener als es jemals war. Wenn manche jetzt unglücklich wären, sei dies nur vorübergehend, einem grossen, einigenden Plan unterworfen. Doch dieser wurde nie verwirklicht, statt dessen kam es zu sinnlosem Niedermetzeln und Vernichten.

Und nun wandte sich der Blick in die Ferne, in die Richtung des grossen, unvollendeten Kontinents, von dem nur eine sehr ungenaue Vorstellung vorhanden war: sportlustige, fröhliche Menschen von grosser Freundlichkeit, aber teilnahmslos an alten Kulturgütern. Hochschulen sollten da sein, aber nur als minderwertige Ableger der Heimatinsel, die streng darauf sähe, alle wertvollen Talente an sich zu ziehen und für sich zu behalten, auf die Kolonien jedoch voll Verachtung, wenn es sich um wirkliche Kultur handelte, hinüberblickte.

Dies war der äussere Schein, persönliche Erfahrung zerstörte dieses Trugbild und lehrte ganz andere Wahrheit.

Der Abschied von Europa war schwer, die Welt schien grau, tief-traurig und hoffnungslos, die Furcht in allen ihren Abarten beherrschte alles und alle, es war diese Furcht, die jahrelang auf der ganzen Welt das Zepter führen sollte. Sie führte es auch hier, in dem südlichen Erdteil, aber sie war nicht allgegenwärtig, sie war gemildert, die Entfernung hatte sie abgeschwächt, das klare Blau und das tanzende Sonnenlicht hatte sie durchbohrt. Die Menschen waren liebenswürdig, sogar herzlich zuweilen, aber das Verständnis für vieles, das einem wertvoll war, schien sich hinter rein englischer Tradition zu verbergen:

'Ich ihrer und sie meiner Götter lachten'

Stefan George: *Franken*

Es fehlte die Würze und die Leichtigkeit des lateinisch-romanischen Kulturgutes, das man seit frühester Kindheit als selbstverständlich angenommen hatte, das ganz einfach dazugehörte, dessen ständiges Vorhandensein niemals in Frage gestellt worden war. Und hier, in diesem fremden Lande, fehlte es völlig, wenigstens war dies der erste Anschein.

Dann aber führte mich das Schicksal zu einem, der war von ganz anderer Art, der schien einem anderen Schlage anzugehören. Sein Ruf war in andere Städte gedrungen, aber das schien nicht von grosser Bedeutung und zuerst sogar ganz nebensächlich, weil eine persönliche Begegnung nicht sehr wahrscheinlich schien. Und dann kam es doch dazu und wurde sofort zu einem grossen, zu einem dauernden Erlebnis. Dieses erste Zusammentreffen hinterliess einen tiefen Eindruck, blieb seither unauslöschlich in meinem Gedächtnis. Der Hintergrund: ein Gebäude im viktorianischen Stil mit Butzenscheiben ähnlichen Fenstern, durch diese fielen die starken Strahlen eines australischen Sommertages. In diesem Licht stand ein breiter, bequemer Schreibtisch voll von Büchern und Stößen von beschriebenen Papieren. Dahinter die Gestalt: eisgraue, leicht gelockte Haare umgeben eine hohe Denkerstirne, unter der einem stahlblaue Augen freundlich entgegenlächeln, zuerst war es nur ein Blick der Ermutigung und der Aufforderung: 'komm zu mir, ich glaube ich kann Dir etwas bieten, ich kann Dich einführen in die Wunder und das Heiligtum der Symbolisten.' Gleichzeitig war da die erste Wahrnehmung der Hände: klein und ausdrucksvoll in der Beschaffenheit, voller Beschwingtheit und innerer Bewegtheit wie der ganze Mann. Diese beredten Hände und diese beseelten Augen sollten noch oft unvergessliche Stunden im Studierzimmer oder im Hörsaal begleiten, das Wort des Lehrers und Führers mit einem Blick, mit einer plastischen Gebärde unterstützend. Menschlichkeit und gütiges Verstehen waren es zuerst, die aus seinen Augen sprachen, später spiegelten sie vielerlei Stimmungen und Gefühle.

Sie sprühten vor Uebermut und Lebensfreude als er von Rabelais, dem Wortkünstler sprach. Das 'Trinch' des Orakels wurde zur greifbaren Wirklichkeit, Gargantua und Pantagruel agierten ihre Streiche vor uns, ihr Gelächter war hörbar und ansteckend, ihre witzigen Einfälle erfüllten den Zuhörer mit Entzücken. Die male-rische Fülle des humanistischen Arztes entfaltete sich vor unsern Augen.

Später war es Montaigne, der aus seinem abgeschiedenen Turme, mit der Stimme des verehrten Lehrers, mit uns redete. Seine Lebensweisheit, uns als 'Essais' überliefert, war nicht schulmeisterlich oder trocken, sondern es wurde uns ganz klar, dass er auf seinen

Reisen und während des Studiums der Alten viel Erfahrung gesammelt hatte. Das Schloss bei Bordeaux mit seinem weisen Einwohner erschien uns bildhaft. Sein ironisches Lächeln über die Schwächen der Menschen, sein Urteil über Grausamkeit und Wahnwitz, seine Aufforderung zur Duldsamkeit, erstanden von neuem, lebendig und gegenwärtig.

Das Feuer der Begeisterung jedoch leuchtete in des Lehrers Augen, als er uns in das Werk Mallarmés und ein Jahr darauf in jenes des Valéry einführte. Diesen Stunden muss man den hehren Namen der Offenbarung geben, weil sie das zweifellos wurden. Die Romantiker waren wohl bekannt, die meistens in wortreichen Beschreibungen ihrer Stimmung und ihren Empfindungen Ausdruck gaben, auch ihrer Unzufriedenheit mit der nichtssagenden Umgebung beklagten, aber der Einbildungskraft des Lesers liessen sie nicht sehr viel Raum. Nun zeigte uns der Meister wie jedes Wort genau gewogen, zum Sprungbrett der Phantasie werden kann, die uns die Teilnahme an dem Geisteszustand des Dichters gewährt, der sich aus der Intelligenz, Empfindungen und dem seelischen Erlebnis zusammensetzt. Der Dichter verwendet althergebrachte Runen und Zeichen in neuer Form und für diese Form wird höchste Vollendung angestrebt, und das mit den spärlichsten Mitteln. Das Nichts, 'le Néant' und auch das verneinende Wort werden zu grösster Bedeutung erhoben.

Im Verlauf der angeregten Stunden über Mallarmé erfuhren wir vieles von der Kraft seiner Sprache, über den Mann, der 'gemeinsame Verwandtschaften erspürt', 'similitudes qui brillent parmi les mots'. Der Lehrer führte uns voll Sicherheit durch die 'Windungen des Irrgartens' dieses Dichters und auch 'in den Spitzenturm' klangen wir, geleitet von fester Führerhand. Sänger gab es vor ihm, die die Gabe hatten, Worte zu verdichten, aber ihre Gedichte waren zu wortreich, sie bedienten sich der Worte häufig um leere Stellen auszuschmücken. Sie zu verschwenden zeigt einen gewissen Mangel an Empfindsamkeit, an poetischer Einfühlung. Das Wort ist allmächtig in Mallarmés Auffassung der Dichtkunst, so wertvoll, dass er es wie ein lebendes Wesen behandelt, und wenn es wiederkehrt, hat es dasselbe Antlitz. Der Meister zeigte dies an Beispielen wie 'vol', 'aile', 'diamant', die das wunderklar erscheinen liessen, weil sie bei Mallarmé einen unwandelbaren Sinn haben. Noch einen andern Beweis gab er uns für des Dichters feine Wortkenntnis: die Art, wie er sich der Eigenschaftswörter bedient. Diese bedeuten für den mittelmässigen Dichter eine grosse Versuchung, er benützt sie als Füllsel, er verbindet sie ständig mit Hauptwörtern. Im Gegensatz hierzu wäre ein Vergleich mit Mallarmés *Toast Funèbre* ratsam. Wenn dieser Dichter ein Eigenschaftswort verwendet, ist es um

einen noch nicht ausgesprochenen Gedanken einzuführen. Er war 'un poète' im ursprünglichen Sinn des Wortes, einer der etwas erschafft. Der Gedanke bei Mallarmé nimmt sofort Gestalt an, sozusagen im Fluge. Der Gedanke verflüchtigt sich äusserst geschwind; dem Ausdruck zu geben war sein Wunsch, den Gedanken in einer würdigen Form festzuhalten. Alle seine Pläne zu verwirklichen, erlaubte ihm jedoch die Zeit nicht. Sein Einfluss erstreckt sich von Valéry zu den Kubisten, den Dadaisten und den Surrealisten.

So war es, dass wir dichterisches Bewusstsein untersuchten. Die Dichter, die wir Symbolisten nennen, spalten sozusagen ihr Ich; das eine erlebt und das zweite beobachtet dieses Erlebnis und gibt ihm dichterische Form. Es ist Leben, eigene Erfahrung verdichtet, im Doppelsinn dieses Wortes. Zum grössten Erlebnis nun unter der Führung des geliebten Lehrers wurde Paul Valéry, der den Beinamen 'poète de l'intelligence' trägt. Unvergessliche Stunden bleiben es, da wir ihn langsam kennenlernten, den Dichter, der die pessimistische Philosophie studierte, aber mehr aus Neugierde als aus Angst. Er hatte weder das tragische Temperament eines Baudelaire noch den schwarzseherischen Nihilismus seines Meisters Mallarmé. Valéry ist gleichmütig, er strahlt Ruhe und Klarheit aus, die man aber keineswegs mit Kälte verwechseln darf. In seinem ganzen Werk spürt man Wärme, eine geistige und künstlerische Wärme, die Stärke einflösst.

Aus einer Fülle von wunderbaren Gedichten, die wir mit dem verehrten Professor prüften, tauchen am deutlichsten die *Cantiques des Colonnes* und *Le Cimetière Marin* aus der Erinnerung auf. Wie unglaublich plastisch standen sie da vor unserem inneren Auge, diese marmornen, griechischen Säulen, die zum Gedicht werden, zum Orchester und zu dem, was ein Orchester begleitet, nämlich zur Hymne. Den Bäumen gleich sind Säulen unbeweglich, aber ohne Unterlass steigen sie zum Himmel empor, den sie zu berühren scheinen, ihre Kapitelle ('chapeaux') sind lichtgekrönt und haben Vögel zum Schmuck:

Douces colonnes, aux
Chapeaux garnis de jour,
Ornés de vrais oiseaux
Qui marchent sur le tour.

Sie singen eine unhörbare Melodie und erinnern an Orgelpfeifen. Warum streben sie so hoch? Sie leben doch nicht, aber sie versinnbildlichen künstlerische Vollendung. Der Künstler löste sie mit seinem Meissel aus ihrem Bette und sie wurden poliert, um das Licht zu reflektieren. Die klassischen Säulen zieren griechische

Tempel und so kann Valéry sein Heidentum zum Ausdruck bringen, seine Absage an die christliche Kirche kundtun. Er spricht vom 'nez sous le bandeau' und betont, dass sich die Säulen nicht zum Kniefall erniedrigen. Sie zeigen die vollständige Unabhängigkeit ihrer Schönheit. Ihre Vollendung besteht in ihrer Ebenmässigkeit, sie verwirklichen Göttlichkeit ohne Götter zu benötigen. Vollendung und Schönheit sind an sich göttlich. Wir fanden hier das stolze Bekenntnis Valérys zur griechischen Auffassungsweise. Die vollendete Wissenschaft des Architekten spricht auch aus den Säulen: sie sind die Töchter mathematischer Lehrsätze, auf denen die Sonne zufrieden einschläft. Diese unverdorbenen Schwestern sind zur Hälfte feurig, weil sie die Sonne reflektieren, und zur Hälfte kühl, weil sie aus Marmor sind. Sie haben niemals wie Frauen getanzt, nur die Winde und die Blätter der Schlingpflanzen haben sich an sie geschmiegt und ebenso die Jahrhunderte und die Geschichte der Völker. Sie erstreben Ewigkeit und so vermögen sie auch am Zug der Zeit teilzunehmen, sie ziehen durch die Jahrhunderte, einem Steine gleich, der durch das Wasser gleitet. Sie hinterlassen ihre Spuren in der Geschichte. Dass die Kunst mächtiger ist als die Natur, ist eine Lehre Valérys.

Und so kamen wir auch mit dem australischen Meister zum 'Friedhof am Meer'. Nie werde ich den jähren, lebhaften Aufstrich der kleinen, ausdrucksvollen Hand, wie ein Vogel im steilen Auf-
flug, vergessen, als er die Bedeutung von *Midi le Juste* bildhaft heraufbeschwor. Ich habe dieses wunderbare Gedicht wiederholt, selber gelesen, und vorgetragen gehört, aber immer wird es die Erinnerung an die Kunst des verehrten Lehrers hervorzaubern, der alles in ein künstlerisches Erlebnis verwandelte. Senkrecht stand seine Hand und senkrecht fallen die Sonnenstrahlen, genau in der Mitte das absolute Nichts (*le néant*) versinnbildlichend, das auch durch das Meer dargestellt ist. Der Friedhof, wo Valérys Vorfahren ruhen, liegt am Mittelmeer. Das Gefühl der Vergänglichkeit steigt auf, wie in Grays elegischem Gedicht und das Meer ist unbewegt und ruhig und wir denken an das Nichts, in dem sich alles auflöst. Aber bald wird das Meer stürmen und der Dichter sieht ein, dass die Erfahrung des Lebens dafürsteht, wenn es auch aus dem Nichts hervorkommt und dahin zurückführt, ist es doch bewegt, reich an Taten und Schönheit, dem ewigen Wechsel unterworfen.

Comme le fruit se fond en jouissance,
Comme en délice il change son absence
Dans une bouche où sa forme se meurt. . . .

in obigen Versen deutete der beredte Lehrer die Beziehungen des Dichters zur Frucht: die Frucht, die im Munde schmilzt und

Eine bescheidene Widmung

sich so zum Genuss verwandelt. Am Schluss des Gedichtes wird uns die Wahl des Dichters klar, es war ein männliches Bewusstsein, das vor der Wahl zwischen Leben und Tod stand und das Leben, sozusagen aus Heroismus, wir sind im Lande Corneilles, wählte.

Bisher sprach ich von den gemeinsamen Stunden des Lehrers mit seinen Schülern; ich habe noch nichts von den denkwürdigen Gelegenheiten des 'Zwiesgesprächs' gesagt. Die Rückgabe von Aufsätzen, wo man sich das erste Mal gleichsam schöpferisch betätigen konnte, wurde zum wertvollen, geistigen Ansporn. Wie reich und dankbar wurde man entlassen, was für eine übergrosse Freude bedeutete die Bemerkung unter einer Arbeit über 'Le parallélisme de Valéry'. 'Bon travail, serré et sobre à la française', geschmückt mit einem breiten, klaren 'A'. Dies bedeutete eine Aufforderung mehr zu leisten, gründlicher zu arbeiten. Wir wurden auch beauftragt unsere Erklärung des *Air de Sémiramis* zu schreiben, dieser Königin der hängenden Gärten, in ihrem unendlich weiten Reich, dessen König sie tötete, aber dessen Erinnerung im Volke weiterlebt und Gehorsam erzwingt. Diese Sémiramis verkörpert Valérys Ideale mit ihrer Schönheit und ihrer Intelligenz. Und der Meister zeigte seine Zufriedenheit und seine Anerkennung mit Bemerkungen und gütigem Eingehen auf die vorgeschlagene Lösung. Ermutigend und immer hilfreich, niemals des Ratgebens müde, fanden wir ihn immer. Sein ausgedehntes Wissen erweckte unaufhörliche Bewunderung. Seine genaue Kenntnis vieler Sprachen und Literaturen, die für ihn tatsächlichen Besitz bedeuten, wurde für uns alle zu einer Quelle oft wiederholten Vergnügens. Gross war das Erstaunen als er bewies, dass er die Feinheiten meiner Muttersprache verstand, als ob es seine eigene wäre. Unverständlich, hermetisch verschlossen schien das Gedicht *Die Priester* von Stefan George:

Mit der nebel verschwinden eilen sie
Mit dem tag der den deckenden schleier hebt
Beide zeigen untrügliche spuren
Von freuden über maass genossen—. . .

Endlich legte ich es ihm vor, sein einmaliges Lesen brachte die Lösung, die jetzt so spielend schien, natürlich es waren Priester der Liebe, das wurde nun völlig klar.

Klarheit im Vortrag, als Folge eines vollständigen Verstehens des Gegenstandes war immer ein Kennzeichen seiner Lehrtätigkeit, zu der er eigens geschaffen schien. Niemals hatte man den Eindruck, dass etwas nicht vorbereitet sei. So leicht wäre es gewesen, sich einfach auf sein weites Wissen zu stützen und der

Eingebung des Augenblicks zu folgen. Nein, auch die kleinste Plauderei im Rahmen einer Studentenveranstaltung war genau ausgedacht und den Zuhörern angepasst. Zwei kleine, ebenmässige Hände leicht gehoben, das Wichtige sozusagen unterstreichend, die Ausführungen begleitend, hinterliessen einen bleibenden Eindruck. Auch in diesem Zusammenhange steht die Gestalt des Lehrers vor mir, wie er klein und zierlich an der schwarzen Tafel steht, wichtige Worte und Redewendungen mit klaren, runden Buchstaben niederschreibt. Er führt die Kreide mit Liebe und Gefühl, wie ein Maler seinen Pinsel. Es freut ihn das Wort zu erklären, es seinen Schülern so nah wie möglich zu bringen. Es nimmt Gestalt an, Sinn und Prägung und bleibt im Gedächtnis, nachdem die Kreide längst verlöscht ist.

Sein Respekt für den Menschen war kenntlich in seinem gütigen Verstehen für den schwächsten Studenten. Ein ewig junger Geist, den der Umgang mit der Jugend anregt, zeichnet ihn aus. Er hatte schnell eine teilnahmevolle Entschuldigung für Unzulänglichkeiten bereit, hingegen aber unerbittliche Strenge für Frechheit und dreiste Dummheit. Ganz erfüllt von der Liebe zu Frankreich und immer bestrebt dessen Einfluss zu stärken, zu fördern und zu erweitern, hat er hier am südlichen Kontinent eine Hochburg der Geisteswissenschaften und der Kultur geschaffen. Als er sich vom Lehramte zurückzog, kamen uns Carossas Worte in den Sinn:

Was einer ist, was einer war,
Beim Scheiden wird es offenbar.
Wir hörens nicht, wenn Gottes Weise summt,
Wir schauern erst, wenn sie verstummt.

APOLOGIA PRO EXEGETICE

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'Vis-à-vis de Mallarmé, on est toujours impie. De quelque façon qu'on le traite.' Thus Mme Emilie Noulet begins the avant-propos to her *Dix poèmes de Stéphane Mallarmé*,¹ later to explain (p.x) how she 'resolved to limit the sacrilege' involved in such *exégèses* (the word is on the title-page) as she is about to perform. A similarly apologetic tone is adopted by Dr Gardner Davies at the outset of his *Les 'Tombeaux' de Mallarmé: essai d'exégèse raisonnée*,² and is not absent from the foreword of Professor Chisholm's *An Approach to M. Valéry's 'Jeune Parque'*.³ There is no reason to doubt that the traditional *captatio benevolentiae* is in all three instances backed by the genuine modesty of the commentators and their reverence for the object of their attentions. Perhaps one of them goes too far when she declares her scruples allayed by the conviction that 'Mallarmean exegesis' is certainly even less read than the poetry itself and that, being essentially a work of popularisation, it achieves the paradox of not winning any adept! How much sounder is Mme Noulet's final plea: 'Who would forbid the child to take to pieces his beloved plaything or the man to probe the sky he gazes on?'

What is particularly significant, however, is that all three commentators are concerned to defend themselves against critics or readers hostile to the very idea of poetic exegesis. Dr Davies has in mind 'certains lecteurs, gardiens jaloux de l'hermétisme mallarméen'. Professor Chisholm 'certain critics' representative of 'a tendency to decry exegeses on the ground that poetry does not lend itself to "explanation"'. Mme Noulet alludes by implication to the same type of critic when she 'wonders whether the most irreverent readers are not those who claim to admire without understanding and to admire the more the less they seek to understand'. 'Pour eux, la poésie se lit comme on se grise, l'esprit absent . . .' Such people do exist. And on occasion they voice their protests, though usually with more eloquence than argument.

It is well nigh thirty years since the writer of this note heard, as a student sitting in the Amphithéâtre Richelieu of the Sorbonne, a revered professor, Gustave Cohen, perform the unprecedented act of submitting a work by a living author to the processes of 'l'explication française'. The poem, for such it was, had seen the light a mere seven or eight years before this memorable day (24th

February, 1928). Its title? *Le Cimetière Marin*. And when, at the conclusion of his lecture, the *exégète*, with a blend of piety and pride, looked toward the balcony and asked, 'Maître, vous ai-je bien expliqué?' many of us only then discovered, with a thrill of surprise and excitement, that the author, Paul Valéry, had been present at the whole proceeding. Cohen waited a year before publishing his commentary in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* (XXXII, 202-230). In 1933 he republished it, chez Gallimard, in a small slim volume with the following title-page: *Essai d'explication du 'Cimetière Marin', précédé d'un avant-propos de Paul Valéry au sujet du 'Cimetière Marin'*.

Both in 1929 and in 1933 the *essai d'explication* gave rise to a flood of review and newspaper articles, not all favourable. Some tempered approval with criticism of details of interpretation. Some, on the other hand, condemned the exegetical approach to poetry altogether. Typical of these latter is one that appeared over the signature of André Charlier in *La Bibliographie mensuelle* of July, 1933, so typical indeed that it would deserve to be reproduced in full. Here, at any rate, are its essential passages:

Il fut un temps où nous nous exerçâmes, comme tout le monde, à ces jeux d'analyse qui s'appellent des explications de textes. Je me rappellerai toujours ma stupéfaction le jour où j'entendis un professeur illustre . . . expliquer *le Loup et l'Agneau* . . . C'était merveilleux. On était plongé dans l'horreur et l'admiration à la fois, sans savoir si l'on avait affaire à une mutilation sadique ou à un chef-d'oeuvre de chirurgie . . . Dès les premières pages (sc. of Cohen's commentary) je m'y suis trouvé en pays de connaissance: oui, c'était bien cela qu'on nous apprenait à faire avec les auteurs 'du programme'. Le triomphe était ici d'autant plus beau que le poème était réputé plus obscur. Projeter dans ces arcanes symbolistes des lumières si définitives, à la fois philosophiques, métaphysiques, mythiques, allégoriques, philologiques, historiques, géographiques, biographiques et même—pourquoi pas?—poétiques, la tentative était hardie et le succès est, il faut le dire, total. M. Cohen a beau . . . nous dire au terme de son analyse: 'Je voudrais que l'on oubliât ce commentaire et celui qui l'a fait, que rien ne s'interposât plus entre le poète et son lecteur . . .', cette modestie ne nous abuse pas. L'explication a épuisé . . . la réalité dont elle a fait son objet; cette réalité poétique est désormais fixée, elle est devenue parfaitement intelligible.—Tout cela est si intelligent que nous n'avons guère envie de sourire plus de deux ou trois fois . . . On peut se réjouir d'apprendre que . . . dans *Midi le*

juste, le qualificatif 'n'a qu'une valeur mathématique et non une signification morale'. Après tout, oui, pourquoi pas? C'est peut-être vrai. Mais en somme, qu'est-ce que cela nous fait? A quoi cela sert-il? Il nous suffisait, dès le seuil du livre, de contempler la photographie du cimetière de Sète dont M. Cohen a cru devoir rehausser son commentaire, pour nous douter que nous entendions la poésie d'une autre façon . . .

The critic showed, moreover, by quoting from Valéry's foreword, that he felt he had the poet on his side. This is an important point to consider.

Paul Valéry's introduction to Cohen's commentary is a valuable statement of the poet's attitude to his poem. Beginning with an account of the long elaboration of the *Cimetière Marin* until the day when it achieved its *accidental fixation* by being carried off and published by a friendly editor (Jacques Rivière of the *N.R.F.*), the *avant-propos* ends with what might at first glance seem to be a mere pirouette: '*Il n'y a pas de vrai sens d'un texte. Pas d'autorité de l'auteur.*' (Valéry's italics). Once published, the poem belongs to every man to use as he sees fit and according to his means. It is not at all certain that the author will 'use' it better than anybody else, his perception of what he has done being confused by his consciousness of what he wished to do. But this modest licensing of Cohen's exegesis, behind which only an 'esprit mal tourné' will imagine Valéry smiling a disabused and equivocal smile, is not, and could hardly be, what M. Charlier takes as support for his own disapproval. It is rather that section of the *avant-propos* in which Valéry declares (p.23) that what matters is not what the poet 'meant to say', but what he 'meant to do', and what he meant to do was, of course, to write a *poem*, in other words something in which thought and form are fused into an indissoluble whole, something diametrically opposed to prose (in which the idea is paramount and clarity is the essential virtue). This argument of Valéry's, so crudely paraphrased here, culminates in the following affirmation:

En somme, plus un poème est conforme à la Poésie, moins il se peut penser en prose sans périr. Résumer, mettre en prose un poème, c'est tout simplement méconnaître l'essence d'un art. (p.22.)

One can imagine with what glee M. Charlier pounced on these two sentences, which in fact he proceeded to quote by way of conclusion to his article. But do they really carry that condemnation of exegesis that the critic was pleased to think? Was

Valéry sarcastic, even hypocritical, in finally thanking Cohen for a piece of work that he professed to find 'singularly valuable'?

M. Charlier's triumphant quotation was unfortunately incomplete. The passage continues:

La nécessité poétique est inséparable de la forme sensible, et les pensées énoncées ou suggérées par un texte de poème ne sont pas du tout l'objet unique et capital du discours,—mais des *moyens* qui concourent *également* avec les sons, les cadences, le nombre et les ornements, à provoquer, à soutenir une certaine tension ou exaltation, à engendrer en nous un *monde*—ou un *mode* d'existence—tout harmonique. (pp.22-23. Valéry's italics)

The sense of this is clear: Valéry is not condemning exegesis at all, but such analyses as concentrate on one element of the poem—its translatable 'meaning'—to the neglect of that other element—its form. And, as if to show that this second element is as (approximately) definable as the first, Valéry goes on to recount his initial obsession by a rhythm (the decasyllable), his subsequent impulse to choose a six-lined stanza, and so forth. Valéry goes close to saying (pp.25-27) that the form is the generator of the poem; for him 'the most *poetic* of ideas' is 'the idea of composition'. But again he stresses the intimate union of form and meaning: composition proceeds simultaneously and continuously in both elements:

Il n'y a pas un temps pour le 'fond' et un temps pour la 'forme'; et la composition en ce genre ne s'oppose pas seulement au désordre ou à la disproportion, mais à la *décomposition*. Si le sens et le son (ou si le fond et la forme) se peuvent aisément dissocier, le poème se *décompose*. (p.29. Valéry's italics)

The conclusion to be drawn from this? It is Valéry's:

Conséquence capitale: les 'idées' qui figurent dans une œuvre poétique n'y jouent pas le même rôle, ne sont pas du tout des *valeurs de même espèce*, que les 'idées' de la prose. (p.29. Valéry's italics)

What is this but a warning that a poem's meaning, however important, is not the whole poem? But such a warning, particularly salutary on the threshold of an 'essai d'explication', in no way implies condemnation of the attempt to find what the poem's meaning is. As Voltaire held that 'toute plaisanterie expliquée cesse d'être une plaisanterie', so certain critics opine that a poem

explained is no longer a poem. But to the reader or hearer who does not know what it is about, the joke does not even begin to exist, and may not the same be said of the poem?

Disapproval of exegesis must, by the same token, extend to translation. But at this point, rather than enter upon a defence of translation, notably by pointing out how much poorer most nations would be if the great poetry of other tongues (e.g. *The Book of Psalms*) had not been rendered *tant bien que mal* into their own, or by showing how certain undeniable poets have not hesitated to translate other men's poems (cf. Edmund Spenser's englishing of Du Bellay's *Ruins of Rome* and, more recently, T. S. Eliot's of the *Anabasis* of Saint-Jean Perse), let us notice how the lie has been given to the opponents of both exegesis and translation by one of the very poets whose arcana they most jealously seek to guard from sacrilege: I refer to Mallarmé.

To Léon Bloy, Mallarmé was 'l'inintelligible auteur du *Tombeau d'Edgar Poe*'. Having, at the request of Mrs. Sara Sigourney Rice, written his sonnet for inclusion in the Poe Memorial Volume of 1876, Mallarmé was to find two other American ladies vying in turning his lines into English verse.⁴ To one of these, Mrs Sarah Helen Whitman (Poe's former fiancée), 'with a gallant desire to aid her', as we are informed,⁵ the author provided . . . what, but a translation into English, word by word, line by line, complete with 'les mots sous-entendus' in brackets, according to a practice that so many modern examiners deplore in their candidates, and rounded off by seven footnotes! And the notes (in English) are of the type: 'this means . . .'. For example, *l'ange* of v.5 is explained as follows: 'the Angel means the above said Poet.' The gloss on vv.8-9:

Proclamèrent très haut le sortilège bu
Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange

is remarkably blunt: 'in plain prose, writes Mallarmé, charged him with always being drunk'.

Mallarmé 'traducteur et exégète', profaner (if this be the right word) of his own poetic mystery that would bear thinking on. What of the Mallarmé who declared to Jules Huret:⁶ 'Il doit y avoir toujours énigme en poésie' and ' . . . la jouissance du poème . . . est faite de deviner peu à peu'; and who, already at the age of 20, asserted⁷ that 'toute chose sacrée qui veut demeurer sacrée s'enveloppe de mystère', deploring that a page of Hugo was not as inaccessible to the throng as a page of Mozart or Wagner? In this context Mallarmé may even be considered to have foretold the advent of *l'explication de textes*:

Qu'advient-il de cette absence de mystère? . . . Une idée inouïe et saugrenue germera dans les cervelles, à savoir, qu'il est indispensable de l'*enseigner* (Mallarmé's italics) dans les collèges, et irrésistiblement, comme tout ce qui est enseigné à plusieurs, la poésie sera abaissée au rang d'une science. Elle sera expliquée à tous également, car il est difficile de distinguer sous les crins ébouriffés de quel écolier blanchit l'étoile sybilline.⁸

But the Mallarmé who wished to reserve the study of poetry for the elect was also he who translated the poems of Edgar Poe into prose, recognising the inadequacy of his 'calque',⁹ yet obviously believing that something of the original could, and should, be conveyed to French readers. Poe's language—rhymes, rhythms, harmonies—Mallarmé could not hope, would not pretend, to reproduce; we are left with Poe's ideas and images—the very stuff of exegesis.

Mallarmé, translator (and scholiast) of Poe, not surprisingly saw no reason why he should not translate and gloss his own sonnet. His example is both illustrious and valuable—how valuable, the present writer thinks, may not have been generally realised, for, apart from M. Chassé's publication of it,¹⁰ and a footnote taking last-minute cognisance of it in Gardner Davies' *Les 'Tombeaux' de Mallarmé* (p.90, n.2), I am not aware that it has been elsewhere cited, at any rate in defence of exegesis. Its implication is, however, certain: one may, for purely poetic reasons, that is, for a better understanding and appreciation of the poem as a whole—not to parade one's ingenuity, not even to inculcate an intellectual discipline—legitimately seek to make clear to oneself or others the ideas and images of a poem.¹¹ That this intellectual content is not the whole poem, Valéry has stated and who would disagree? That the very mystery (not to call it obscurity) of the text is of the essence of the poem and therefore precious, every lover of Mallarmé, Valéry and their like believes and knows. But the mystery, like that of the universe itself, is the better felt for being more deeply searched, let but the search be reverent and sincere. My conclusion is that with which one of Chisholm's disciples, himself a master of the *exégèse raisonnée*, ends his book:¹²

S'il est du devoir de l'exégète de soulever le voile de la poésie (mallarméenne), il doit songer à ce voile comme faisant partie de l'œuvre, et le laisser retomber pieusement, son travail terminé.

¹ Geneva, Droz, 1948.

² Paris, José Corti, 1950.

³ Melbourne University Press, 1938.

⁴ Their renderings, reproduced by Mallarmé himself, are to be found in the Bibliothèque de la Pléiade edition of the *Œuvres complètes* of Mallarmé (1945), pp.224-225.

⁵ See Charles Chassé, 'Essai d'une interprétation objective du *Tombeau d'Edgar Poe*; ou Mallarmé traduit par Mallarmé lui-même', in *Revue de Littérature comparée*, XXIII (1949), pp.97-109.

⁶ *Œuvres complètes*, p.869.

⁷ 'Hérésies artistiques: L'Art pour tous' (*Œuvres complètes*, pp.257-260).

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp.257-258.

⁹ 'Scolies: *Eulalie*' (*Œuvres complètes*, p.233).

¹⁰ M. Chassé, of course, has not failed to see the force of Mallarmé's example, as his opening paragraph shows: 'On m'a reproché, à propos de mes *Lueurs sur Mallarmé*, d'avoir tenté de serrer de trop près le texte des poèmes de Mallarmé en cherchant à les traduire mot par mot en langage clair. J'ai tout au moins aujourd'hui cette excuse que . . . Mallarmé . . . s'est tout le premier livré à un travail analogue.'

¹¹ It is perhaps unnecessary to add that the pedagogical procedure known as *explication de textes* does not confine itself to content, but takes artistic form into account as well.

¹² Gardner Davies, *Les 'Tombeaux' de Mallarmé*, p.229.

VALÉRY EXPLIQUÉ DEVANT VALÉRY

GUSTAVE COHEN†

Professeur Honoraire en Sorbonne

*Ni lu ni compris
Aux meilleurs esprits
Que d'erreurs promises*

L. C. SYLPHE

POURRAIS-JE offrir à notre cher jubilaire Chisholm, révélateur et interprète du symbolisme français, à l'Australie fraternelle, un hommage plus adéquat que ces souvenirs du dernier et puissant surgeon de ce mouvement des années '80.

Elle n'est pas toujours à conseiller, la fréquentation des grands hommes, et il vaut mieux, conseille Ruskin, dans *Sesame and Lilies*, aller les retrouver dans votre bibliothèque, où c'est eux qui font antichambre, attendant votre visite. Il a raison, aussi ne les ai-je jamais recherchés et ce sont les circonstances qui me les ont fait rencontrer. Ainsi de Paul Valéry.

La première fois que je le vis, c'est quand il vint faire à Strasbourg sa conférence sur *l'Esprit Européen*; en 1923, je pense,—car je n'étais pas encore à la Sorbonne—quelques ans après que Maurice Barrès y avait fait ses trois célèbres leçons sur le *Génie Rhénan*. Ni l'un, ni l'autre de ces prestigieux écrivains, pas plus qu'Anatole France, n'étaient orateurs. Leur voix était sourde et leur parole hésitante.

Le soir, je me trouvais invité à rencontrer le Maître, chez mon collègue Edmond Bauer, qui fut le suppléant de Langevin, au Collège de France, un des rares qui, avec lui, comprenait Einstein.¹ Il me présenta ce poète, dans un cercle d'autres physiciens, par lesquels il se faisait expliquer les derniers secrets d'une science en perpétuel devenir, jusqu'à consentir à une certaine contingence des lois naturelles.

Attentif, il les écoutait et les suivait, car son intelligence était universelle, aussi apte à la Mathématique qu'à la Poésie. A un moment donné, il les interrompit et, levant la main droite en détachant l'index, émit ces mots que je transcris fidèlement, car ils sont supervaléryens: *Cela se complique, cela devient intéressant*. La simplification et la clarté à la Thiers ou à la Taine, n'étaient pas son fait. Ce disant, il secouait sur son front haut la mèche brune qui y ondulait, son œil bleu lançait des éclairs et il

[† We deeply regret that since this article was offered to us for publication, news has come of the death of Professor Cohen in June, 1958.—Ed.]

souriait sous son abondante moustache. J'observai qu'il était de taille médiocre, quoique bien prise.

La seconde fois que je devais me trouver en contact avec lui, fut plus sensationnelle : c'était dans l'hiver 1928, étant professeur suppléant en Sorbonne, depuis trois ans déjà. Selon les règles et l'exemple que je tenais de mon maître Gustave Lanson, après la retraite duquel j'avais abandonné mes cours à l'Ecole Normale Supérieure, j'avais enseigné pendant l'année scolaire 1927-1928, l'*Explication française*. Celle-ci semble être une discipline essentiellement de chez nous, puisque le gouvernement suédois avait envoyé, précédemment, en France, une mission pour étudier comment elle y était pratiquée dans nos Facultés des Lettres et nos Lycées. Ceci, dans l'intention de l'appliquer à la littérature scandinave. Pour le dire en peu de mots, il s'agit, en choisissant un texte assez limité, d'en dégager les caractéristiques d'un auteur, tant dans l'Invention, que dans la Disposition et l'Elocution, pour me servir des termes de la vieille Rhétorique, qui avait du bon, malgré son pédantisme.

J'avais donc étudié, de semaine en semaine, successivement l'établissement du texte d'après les manuscrits et la dernière édition revue par l'auteur, les sources (auxquelles les étudiants ont tendance à s'attacher trop exclusivement), l'idée essentielle et les idées accessoires, le style, etc. . . . Mais ayant presque terminé le semestre et épuisé les détails, je ne voulus pas donner aux étudiants l'impression que j'éludais l'explication d'ensemble et, me lançant à l'eau, non sans témérité, j'annonçai que je ferais une *Explication du Cimetière Marin* de Paul Valéry. Ou'avais-je conçu? Qu'avais-je osé?

A mesure que les jours me séparant de cette épreuve cruciale et crucifiante passaient, mon inquiétude croissait. Le plus simple était d'interviewer l'écrivain qui, avec bonne grâce, m'accorda un rendez-vous, mais, malgré un accueil fort bienveillant, je n'obtins pas grand' chose, si ce n'est que le *Cimetière Marin* est le lieu des tombes familiales de sa ville natale de Sète.²

Voilà pour l'inspiration; quant à la forme, il l'avait conçue, en sixain décasyllabe, dont il entendait le rythme, sans encore le charger d'un sens.

Le 24 février 1928, mes étudiants et étudiantes de licence-ès-lettres étaient massés dans le vaste amphithéâtre Richelieu, qui a une forme semi-circulaire, m'attendant et me guettant, à ce saut périlleux, où je pouvais me rompre le cou, avec ma fameuse méthode.

A peine avais-je escaladé la chaire, qui faisait face à l'auditoire, que celui-ci aperçut une silhouette mince, se glissant comme une

ombre dans la plus haute travée et essayant d'y passer inaperçue. Vaine tentative, mes élèves le reconnurent (comment avait-il appris la date? Sans doute par mon cousin le Docteur Gorodiche, son ami, et grand valériste) et l'acclamèrent.

La craie en main, devant le tableau noir, j'y traçai trois colonnes pour y résumer les paroles du beau poème que j'avais traité comme une tragédie grecque, confiée à trois personnages: le protagoniste (le non-être ou néant, symbolisé par Midi), le deutéragoniste (la Conscience), et le tritagoniste (l'Auteur).

Quand j'eus terminé ma démonstration, non sans avoir lu et fait vibrer les strophes essentielles et sonores, je me tournai dans la direction de Paul Valéry et lui lançai une invocation passionnée et craintive: 'Maître, ne vous ai-je pas trahi?' A quoi, se dressant de son banc, il répondit par ces mots, où il faut faire la part de l'amabilité méridionale: 'Vous me l'avez rendu plus beau, plus cher, plus clair.' En me quittant, il me dit plaisamment: 'Je hume ici ma future fumée!'

Or, si j'avais à la refaire, cette explication, je ne la conduirais plus ainsi, je la produirais moins rigoureuse et moins didactique, comme je fis, plus tard, à l'Ecole Libre des Hautes Etudes que j'avais fondée à New York, en 1942,³ pour la *Jeune Parque*, la méthode de l'imprégnation par lectures et appréhensions successives, où la pensée fondamentale, d'abord cachée, apparaît de plus en plus claire.

Quoi qu'il en soit, mon interprétation devait paraître un an après dans le numéro du 1er février 1929 de la *Nouvelle Revue Française* et fit couler des flots d'encre, souvent mêlée de fiel.

Dans les salons littéraires, on me combattait à l'aide d'arguments qu'on m'empruntait et Léon Daudet me lança, dans l'*Action Française*, deux colonnes d'injures, qui m'amusèrent beaucoup, comme si j'y étais étranger.

Pour la publier en un petit volume,⁴ G. Gallimard exigeait une préface de Paul Valéry, auteur de sa maison. On l'obtint, non sans peine, et sous cette condition qu'il se refusait à m'accorder sa bénédiction et à donner son estampille à mon interprétation. Une fois publiée, l'œuvre n'est plus à l'auteur, mais au lecteur profane ou critique, qui l'interprète comme il l'entend, affirmait-il.

Une fois, cependant, il fut interpellé en gare de Gênes, par le Président de l'Alliance Française où il allait parler et qui lui demanda son avis sur telle de mes explications. 'Cohen a raison, répondit-il, avec brusquerie, comme pour se débarrasser de "l'interrogant bailli".'

Valéry fut très tardif à donner sa préface (chacun sait que, quoique levé avant le jour et écrivant à la machine, il travaillait

lentement). L'opuscule, précédé d'une photographie du cimetière marin de Sète, ne parut qu'en 1933. Comme je m'impatiençais de ce retard, le poète me calma par ce mot, digne d'un pêcheur autant que d'un philosophe : 'Rien ne s'arrime que dans la durée.'

Trop occupés, l'un et l'autre, nous nous revîmes rarement, puis ce fut la grande tourmente de '40, qui nous fit souffrir tous deux, lui, exilé en France et moi aux Etats-Unis, et nous sépara.

Rentré à Paris et ayant pu remonter dans la chaire de Sorbonne, dont le Gouvernement de Vichy m'avait chassé, le 20 décembre 1940, comme un mauvais domestique à qui on refuse ses huit jours, je repris le contact, par téléphone. Il ne voulait pas que je vinsse le voir, même pour une visite académique, craignant pour moi le froid dont il souffrait lui-même, dans son appartement du 40 rue de Villejust (qui s'appelle aujourd'hui rue Paul Valéry).

C'est avant de partir pour le Midi, en juin 1945, que je recueillis, au téléphone, une de ses ultimes paroles. Se plaignant des importuns, de la perte de temps qu'ils lui causaient, et dont je ne voulais pas être, il me dit : 'J'ai composé mon épitaphe : "Ci-gît Moi, tué par les autres".'

Un mois après, il mourait.

J'écrivis, pour ajouter à mon *Essai d'Explication du Cimetière Marin* cette Epitaphe :

Et maintenant, il est mort, le 20 Juillet dernier, 1945. La France lui a fait des funérailles nationales comme au plus grand poète de l'heure, et le peuple de Paris, qui a compris sa perte, l'a veillé sur la terrasse du Palais de Chaillot, dominant le dôme des Invalides et la coupole de l'Institut faiblement éclairée. Les étudiants ont défilé devant le corps immobile de celui qui avait exprimé le meilleur de leur être, et ainsi firent les troupes, qui lui avaient rapporté sa liberté tant désirée.

Ils auraient souhaité le garder auprès d'eux, sur la Montagne Sainte du Savoir, au Panthéon, pour qu'il continuât à y favoriser leur méditation, mais lui a voulu prendre son éternel repos à Sète, dans le Cimetière Marin, définitivement consacré.

Il paît, pasteur silencieux, le blanc troupeau de ses tranquilles tombes. Ses doutes sont éclairés et dissipés, et il reçoit, fondu dans l'Eternel, les réponses aux questions qu'il lui a posées.

NOTES

¹ Ce dernier aussi, je le rencontrai chez le grand Recteur de l'Académie de Strasbourg, S. Charlety, et il me déconcerta profondément en me parlant d'un Univers *fini*, au lieu de l'Univers *infini* que je continue, malgré lui, dans ma *docta ignorantia*, à postuler.

² Ancienne orthographe reprise de nos jours. A l'honneur d'une municipa-

lité intelligente, les plaques indicatrices portent ce nom. Au pied de la colline, je recueillis un jour une étudiante d'Oxford qui, lisant mon nom, au tableau de ma voiture, me dit: 'Ah! c'est vous qui avez expliqué le *Cimetière Marin*!' Petite récompense d'exégète et de professeur.

³ Cf. Alvin Johnson: *Pioneer's Progress, an Autobiography* (in—8°, New York, The Viking Press, 1952, pp.371-372), Aujourd'hui French University of New York.

⁴ *Essai d'Explication du Cimetière Marin précédé d'un avant-propos de Paul Valéry au sujet du Cimetière Marin*—(Paris, Gallimard, 1933, in—24, 114p.) 2e édition, suivie d'une glose analogue sur la *Jeune Parque* (Paris, Gallimard et de Visscher, Bruxelles, 1946, in 24°, pl). Edition nouvelle revue et augmentée, 1957, *ibid.* (à paraître).

AN EXEGESIS OF MALLARMÉ'S 'M'INTRODUIRE DANS TON HISTOIRE...'

W. GARDNER DAVIES

Paris

IF '*M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .*' does not have the same pretensions as some of Mallarmé's other poems devoted to the sun drama, it strikes a more personal note in the simplicity of its development and the poetry of its images. It was first published in the 13th June 1886 issue of the *Vogue*. As a plea for the ambiguous satisfaction of platonic love, it takes its place between the passage of *Apparition* in which Mallarmé speaks of the

parfum de tristesse
Que même sans regret et sans déboire laisse
La cueillaison d'un Rêve au cœur qui l'a cuelli.
(p.30)¹

and the lines of '*Mes bouquins refermés sur le nom de Paphos . . .*', where he writes in 1887:

Ma faim qui d'aucuns fruits ici ne se régale
Trouve en leur docte manque une saveur égale.
(p.76)

Some critics have assumed, without giving their reasons, that the poem was written for Méry Laurent.² Indeed this seems very likely. When he wrote it, Mallarmé had known Méry for some five years, had been seeing her almost every day, since Manet's death. Mallarmé's letters to her reveal at once the warm intimacy of their 'amitié amoureuse'³ and its purely platonic basis. One cannot help

feeling that at certain moments each of them must have wondered whether they did not wish to go one step further in their relationship, even at the risk of sacrificing what they already had. '*M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .'*' might be interpreted as a first statement of Mallarmé's attitude on this question, the negative uttered a little too firmly, as if to convince himself. The sonnet which he sent Méry at the end of the following year emphasizes the calm, undemanding quality of their mutual love:

Ne te semble-t-il pas, disons, que chaque année
Dont sur ton front renaît la grâce spontanée
Suffise selon quelque apparence et pour moi
Comme un éventail frais dans la chambre s'étonne
A raviver du peu qu'il faut ici d'émoi
Toute notre native amitié monotone.

(p.60)

The same attitude is evident in so many of the poet's letters. Cf.:

J'y joins le meilleur de mes baisers, celui-là en prose, chérie, et qui ne m'est pas moins cher, et quant à un souhait, un seul, de le renouveler longtemps, chaque année, entends-tu, toi la même, miraculeuse et aimée . . .

Tu es une compagne unique, sais-tu qu'il y a dix ans déjà qu'on se connaît, Paon, et l'impression que me cause fermer les yeux et penser à toi est certainement plus fraîche que jamais . . .

Je t'aime beaucoup, mon grand enfant; et de beaucoup de façons; parce que tu es le camarade parfait, reposant et gai en même temps qu'une autre personne verseuse de délices uniques . . .

Tu es une femme rare, Paon, et renouvelant à ce point l'émanation exquise et intime de toi, qu'il me semble que je ne te connaissais pas comme maintenant, après des années déjà, entends-tu cela.⁴

The possibility of more intimate relations between the two did raise its head at one stage, we know. The incident must have taken place at the beginning of 1889, when Mallarmé spent a couple of days at Royat, as the guest of Méry and her rich American protector, Dr Evans. The following extracts from a subsequent letter are a sober and touching commentary on Méry's refusal:

Sans mot dire, quand tu as, l'hiver, rompu un enchantement, qui me prenait à l'âme, j'ai deviné, sachant ta bonté, qu'il y avait chez toi un motif considérable, et j'en respectai le secret.

Tu le penses, voilà pourquoi je ne voulais pas aller à Royat,

en rien; je commençais, dans ce nouvel état à me faire raison, et souffrir exprès n'a de sens. Mais te résister! . . j'y ai été, passer deux de ces journées de silence, sans abandon, à chacun de mes élans niés par toi, lesquels sont atroces . . .

Tu accueilles une bonne et vieille amitié déjà, je crois que ce sentiment par exemple je le possède, et je trouverai bien, ô toi qui as souhaité qu'il nous unît jusqu'à la mort, une occasion de te le montrer . . .

Trop de choses, ici tu as raison, séparent nos vies pour les rapprocher quand même, sans nous fausser. Au jour le jour, voyons-nous moins; jamais dans cette intimité de si près qui, faute de rester totale entre deux personnes marquées à un coin un peu d'exception, est malaisé . . .

Tu ne peux songer autre chose sinon que mon regard sur toi ne fut pas raisonnable, tu le causas: donne-moi ton front . . .⁵

While there is nothing, therefore, to prove that the poem of 1886 should be interpreted within the framework of Mallarmé's relationship with Méry Laurent, the facts seem to provide good circumstantial evidence to that effect.

* * *

*M'introduire dans ton histoire
C'est en héros effarouché
S'il a du talon nu touché
Quelque gazon de territoire*

The first line is elliptic, leaving to the infinitive the expression of the initial idea: 'if I do claim a place in your life . . .' Mallarmé's prose abounds in similar uses of the infinitive. Cf. in *Confrontation*:

Anéantir un jour de la vie ou mourir un peu, la sachant, quels cris jetterais-tu . . . (p.410)

Or in *Magie*:

Fermer les yeux ne peut ne voir, régentant la cité comme au temps défunt, l'accroupie en le dégagement de ses ailes, ombre de Notre-Dame. (p.399)

While Mallarmé has something of a predilection for allusions of dubious taste, as long as they are adequately veiled, I am unconvinced by the double entendre which M. Ch. Mauron and others are pleased to see in this first line.⁶ Mallarmé goes on to define the very limited rôle to which he aspires in the history of his beloved. The use of *histoire* in the sense of life story⁷ is normal enough. Cf. in the *Contes indiens*:

An Exegesis of Mallarmé's 'M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .'

. . . la fugitive conta son *histoire*, entrecoupée de sanglots . . .
(p.608)

For the idea expressed by the verb *introduire*, cf.:

—Cela t'arrête, mortel timide; Indra saura t'*introduire* dans le gynécée.

(*Contes indiens*, p.618)

In *Placet futile*, of which the original version, dating from 1862, was rewritten in 1887, Mallarmé expresses his regret that he cannot hope for a place in the intimacy of the beautiful Mme Audouard, who directed *Le Papillon*:

Princesse! à jalouser le destin d'une Hébée
Qui poind sur cette tasse au baiser de vos lèvres.
J'use mes feux mais n'ai rang discret que d'abbé
Et ne figurerai même nu sur le Sèvres.

(p.30)

Pretending he believes her heart for ever closed to him, the poet begs her, with precious exaggeration, to appoint him shepherd of her smiles:

Nommez-nous . . . pour qu'Amour ailé d'un éventail
M'y peigne flûte aux doigts endormant ce bercail,
Princesse, nommez-nous berger de vos sourires.

In the poem which concerns us, the poet's rôle of lover is restricted by the shyness he simulates with regard to any physical contact, and by the reluctance of his beloved. *Héros* means the hero of our romance. Cf. In '*La chevelure vol d'une flamme à l'extrême . . .*':

Une nudité de *héros* tendre diffame
Celle qui ne mouvant astre ni feux au doigt
Rien qu'à simplifier avec gloire la femme
Accomplit par son chef fulgurante l'exploit . . .

(p.53)

And in *Confrontation*:

. . . imposer à son industrie un rendement surfait, pour un *héros*
qu'il faut être et quand le cas comporte du défi . . .

(p.412)

The participle *effarouché* is to be found in a similar context in *La Dernière Mode*:

Le Harem: titre un peu vif peut-être pour quelques dames fran-

çaises, donné par M. d'Hervilly à son dernier livre de poésie.
Qu'aucun éventail ne s'agite, *effarouché* . . .

(p.803)

The image of naked heels, suggestive at once of vulnerability and of resplendent gods and heroes, appears elsewhere. In *L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, Venus treads with her heels on the lava of Etna:

Etna! c'est parmi toi visité de Vénus
Sur ta lave posant ses *talons* ingénus . . .

(p.52)

Cf. in one of the *Chansons bas*:

Il va de cuir à ma paire
Adjoindre plus que je n'eus
Jamais, cela désespère
Un besoin de *talons nus*.

(p.62)

Any contact with her naked flesh is enough to frighten the hesitant lover. Cf.:

Qui parles d'un mortel! selon qui, des calices
De mes robes, arôme aux *farouches délices*,
Sortirait le frisson blanc de ma *nudité*.

(*Hérodiane*, p.47)

Je t'adore, courroux des vierges, ô *délice*
Farouche du sacré fardeau *nu* qui se glisse . . .

(*L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, p.52)

And for the use of *toucher*:

. . . Mais n'allais-tu pas me *toucher*? . . .

(*Hérodiane*, p.46)

The fourth line evokes, with every possible reticence, the forbidden territory into which he dare not venture. Although the word *défendu* does not figure in the text, this implied prohibition, associated in the poet's mind with the traditional injunction not to walk on the grass, immediately calls up the word *gazon*. Conversely, the same preoccupation leads the poet to specify, in speaking of the temple of Wagnerian art, that the steps of the elect '*foulent les gazons*'.⁸ With the notion of the naked heel touching this forbidden territory, cf. in *Arthur Rimbaud*:

Le Sort . . . trancha ce *pied* qui se posait sur le sol natal étranger
(p.518)

*A des glaciers attentatoire
Je ne sais le naïf péché
Que tu n'auras pas empêché
De rire très haut sa victoire*

The idea of forbidden country reminds the hero that his discreet rôle is limited not only by his own shyness but also by the attitude of the other person. He comes to envisage this territory as a region of glaciers. Mallarmé employs a similar image to describe the implacable virginity of Hérodiade:

Nuit blanche de *glaçons* et de neige cruelle!

(p.47)

Cf. in the *Contes indiens*:

. . . elle! la fière Soundari, était-ce sa *froidure* qui se fondait ainsi.

(p.590)

Elsewhere the glaciers evoke the unspoilt purity of the platonic Idea:

Le transparent *glacier* des vols qui n'ont pas fui!

(p.67)

Là-haut où la froidure
Eternelle n'endure
Que vous la surpassiez
Tous ô *glacières*

(*Le Cantique de Saint Jean*, p.49)

The poet sees himself vainly attacking this ice-bound territory. Mallarmé does not seem to have used the word *attentatoire* elsewhere, but we find the corresponding verb in *La Gloire*, where he contemplates bribing the railway employee to prevent him from shattering the dreamy silence of Fontainebleau by barking out the name of the station:

. . . voici, sans *attenter* à ton intégrité, tiens, une monnaie.

(p.289)

I know not what sin of the imagination, the poet goes on, your coldness will not have prevented from fulfilment.⁹ The syntax of the last three lines of the quatrain calls for some comment. Mallarmé writes: 'Je ne sais le naïf péché que tu n'auras pas empêché . . .' as he might have written: 'Je ne sais *quel* naïf péché tu n'auras pas empêché . . .' The first negative strengthens the allusion to sin by making it unrestricted; the poet simulates ignorance of the particular sin that might be involved. The second negative, purely

expletive, has no real force: whatever the sin, his beloved *will* in fact have prevented it from being accomplished. This expletive negative is quite normal in sentences such as 'I do not know what might have happened if . . .', where reference is actually made to what *might have happened*.

In the knowledge that the glaciers he affronts deprive him of any illusion, Mallarmé nevertheless takes pleasure in alluding to the sin that has fired his imagination. Is this not the essential theme of *L'Après-midi d'un Faune* and *Le Nénuphar blanc*?

Moi, de ma rumeur fier, je vais parler longtemps
Des déesses; et par d'idolâtres peintures
A leur ombre enlever encore des ceintures . . .
(p.51)

Je tiens la reine!

O sûr châtiment . . .
(p.52)

In *Le Nénuphar blanc*, Mallarmé does his best to avoid encountering his unknown neighbour, whom he thought of visiting, so that his imagination can delight in her uninhibited:

A quel type s'ajustent vos traits, je sens leur précision, Madame,
interrompre chose installée ici par le bruissement d'une venue,
oui! ce charme instinctif d'en dessous que ne défend pas contre
l'explorateur la plus authentiquement nouée, avec une boucle en
diamant, des ceintures.

(p.285)

As long as her arrival does not bring the disappointment of certainty, 'moindre jamais que le mystère',¹⁰ the poet's imagination knows no bounds:

Séparés, on est ensemble: je m'immisce à de sa confuse intimité,
dans ce suspens sur l'eau où mon songe attarde l'indécise, mieux
que visite, suivié d'autres, l'autorisera.

(p.285)

In *La Dernière Mode*, Mallarmé claims these amatory exploits of the imagination as one of the prerogatives of the poet:

Par une loi supérieure à celle qui, chez les peuples barbares,
enferme véritablement la femme entre des murs de cèdre ou de
porcelaine, le Poète (dont l'autorité en matière de vision n'est
pas moindre que celle d'un prince absolu) dispose avec la pensée
seule de toutes les dames terrestres.

(p.803)

An Exegesis of Mallarmé's 'M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .'

This is the 'naïf péché' of the second line, bereft of any hope of fulfilment except in the poet's imagination. In *Aumône*, is it not some imaginative sin that the poet demands in exchange for his charity?

Tire du métal cher quelque *péché* bizarre
(p.39)

The same idea finds expression in the *Monologue d'un Faune*:

. . . Dormons; je puis rêver à mon *blasphème*
Sans crime . . .
(p.1449)

By *naïf*, Mallarmé seems to mean without material consequence or in ignorance of the consequences. Cf.:

La petite *naïve* et ne rougissant pas
(*L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, p.52)
Naïf baiser des plus funèbres (p.74)
. . . l'enfant qui entre seule d'un pas *naïf* au tombeau . . .
(*Contes indiens*, p.611)

The poet knows that the attitude of his beloved will prevent this sin from being consummated and clamouring its victory. The transitive use of the verb *rire*, in the sense of 'laughingly proclaim', is not found elsewhere in Mallarmé's work.¹¹ Cf. however:

. . . *Proclamèrent très haut* le sortilège bu
Dans le flot sans honneur de quelque noir mélange.
(*Le Tombeau d'Edgar Poe*, p.70)
. . . la plaisanterie *rit haut* ou inspire le tréteau des préfa-
ciers . . .
(*Crise de Vers*, p.365)

And for *victoire*:

. . . il se fait voix pour plus
Nous faire peur avec sa *victoire* méchante
(*L'Azur*, p.38)

Whenever Mallarmé records the absence of something of particular importance to him, we may expect him to compensate for it, in the lines that follow, by one of his brilliant analogical syntheses. In the tercets, the timid hero will project the frustration of his victory into the Western sky, as if to have some visual evidence of it before his eyes. Is there not something similar in the Faun's enjoyment of his voluptuous recollections?

Ainsi, quand des raisins j'ai sucé la clarté,
Pour bannir un regret par ma feinte écarté,
Rieur, j'élève au ciel d'été la grappe vide
Et, soufflant dans ses peaux lumineuses, avide
D'ivresse, jusqu'au soir je regarde au travers.
O nymphes, regonflons des SOUVENIRS divers.
(p.51)

* * *

*Dis si je ne suis pas joyeux
Tonnerre et rubis aux moyeux
De voir en l'air que ce feu troue
Avec des royaumes épars
Comme mourir pourpre la roue
Du seul vespéral de mes chars.*

In order to enjoy the confirmation of his victory, the hero need only watch, on the reddened horizon, the vanishing wheel of his triumphal chariot. The fire which burns a hole in the evening sky is that of the setting sun:

... Par le carreau qu'allume un soir fier d'y descendre
Retourne vers les feux du pur soleil mortel!
(*Toast funèbre*, p.54)

For use of the verb *trouer*, cf.:

... c'est *trouer* de sa réalité, ainsi qu'une vaporeuse toile,
l'ambiance ...
(*Hamlet* p.301)

Mon œil, *trouant* les joncs, dardait chaque encolure
(*L'Après-midi d'un Faune*, p.51)

Around the flaming disc of the sun, the 'scattered kingdoms' are the clouds tinged with royal purple, so often referred to in *Les Dieux antiques*:

Comme il s'enfonce, les *brumes ardentes* l'étreignent et les *vapeurs de pourpre* se jettent par le ciel ...
(p.1216)

La mort du soleil, dans les beaux bosquets du Crépuscule ...
représentant le *réseau féerique des nuages* ...
(p.1238)

Les noms et les incidents du mythe appartiennent au *beau pays des nuages* ...

Cf. elsewhere:

An Exegesis of Mallarmé's 'M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .'

. . . leur rythme le transportera au-delà des jardins, des *royaumes*,
des salles . . .

(Préface à '*Vathek*', p.549)

And for the adjective *épars*, which completes the picture of reddened clouds scattered about the sky:

. . . tous gisements *épars*, ignorés et flottants selon quelque
richesse . . .

(*Solemnité*, p.333)

Mais le blason des deuils *épars* sur de vains murs

(*Toast funèbre*, p.54)

Let us return to the image of the wheel. It recalls first of all a page of *Les Dieux antiques* devoted to Ixion, whom Zeus tied to a four-spoked wheel, to roll with him throughout all eternity. In this passage, Mallarmé writes:

Dyaus (le ciel) lutte pour arracher la *roue du soleil* à l'étreinte
de la nuit.

(p.1226)

The prototype of the chariot, however, is surely that of Phaeton:
. . . conduisant journellement à travers les cieux son *char* traîné
par des chevaux resplendissants . . .

(p.1205)

The hubs of the wheels, the poet says, turn with thunder and rubies. It is interesting to encounter the word *rubis*, with the same ellipsis of the article, in *Le Tombeau de Charles Baudelaire*:

Le temple enseveli divulgue par la bouche
Sépulcrale d'égout bavant *boue et rubis* . . .

(p.70)

Rubis evokes the light and colour of the flaming sun. Is it not rubies, like drops of blood, that compose the torch-symbol at the end of '*La chevelure vol d'une flamme à l'extrême . . .'*'? In the *Contes indiens*, *feu* and *rubis* describe the heroine's red lips, upon which no victor has ever quenched his thirst:

Seules brillent des lèvres avec un *feu de rubis*, sur leur chaste
grenade la bouche d'un vainqueur n'a jamais désaltéré sa soif.

(p.618)

Cf. in *Conflit*:

. . . quelle *pierrerie*, le ciel fluide! . . .

(p.358)

The thunder would seem to suggest the noise of the chariot-wheels, absent in the present analogy; but the idea of thunder is traditionally associated with the sunset drama:

... le dieu mourut au milieu du *tonnerre* et de l'orage ...
(p.1215)

... Phaéton frappé par les tonnerres de Zeus ...
(p.1206)

The wheel of the sun, in the West, seems to 'die purple'. Cf. in *L'Azur*:

Le soleil se *mourant jaunâtre* à l'horizon!
(p.37)

And elsewhere:

... une incompréhensible *pourpre* coule—du fard? du sang?
Etrange le coucher de soleil!
(*Autrefois, en marge d'un Baudelaire*, p.1547)

Mallarmé often uses the adverb *comme*, with the sense of 'as if' or 'so to speak', to weaken the force of the statement that follows. Cf.:

Comme sur quelque vergue bas ...
(p.72)

Comme pour en bénir quelque funeste moule.
(*Tombeau de Verlaine*, p.71)

This wheel disappearing on the horizon, the poet concludes, remembering the imagined prowess of the quatrains, is that of my only evening chariot. The adjective *vespéral*, in Mallarmé's work, almost invariably suggests the sunset:

Maint rêve *vespéral* brûlé par le Phénix
(p.68)

... les importuns qui, par leur abandon, me ferment le lointain
vespéral ...
(*Conflit*, p.359)

A final quotation, from *Nala et Damayantî*, gives the description of the triumphal entry of the hero's chariot into the courtyard of the palace; the sunset, the chariot, the wheel and even the thunder, are all included:

Le *char* vole et, le lendemain, à l'heure dite, entre dans la cour du palais, avec les roulements de *tonnerre*. La foule accourt

enthousiasmée; il n'est pas jusqu'aux paons perchés sur les tuiles incendiées par le soir, qui n'imitent, avec leur queue éblouissante, chaque roue du char véloce . . .

(p.629)

In this poem, the development of the ideas and images is unusually simple. My entry into your life, says Mallarmé, is that of a timid lover, frightened by the contact of your body, if his naked heel should touch some strip of this forbidden territory. In this respect, I am attacking glaciers; for whatever sin I plan to commit, you will prevent from clamouring its victorious fulfilment. However, to enjoy the confirmation of my victory, all I need is to see the fiery sun, in the Western sky, go down amidst the thunder and the scattered clouds, tinged with crimson and purple. It is the wheel of my evening chariot, symbol of triumph.

The main problems of interpretation are characteristic of Mallarmé. There are a few syntactical oddities. The initial ellipsis makes it difficult to be certain of the precise link between the adverbial clause of the first line and the main statement in the second. It is probably one of concession: 'while . . .' or 'although . . .'; Mallarmé conveniently condenses this clause into an infinitive, merely juxtaposed to the main statement. In the second quatrain, some critics have been confused by the expletive negative that follows 'Je ne sais le naïf péché que . . .', as is usual after an introductory clause such as 'Who knows what sin . . .!' More astonishing, if less difficult to understand, is the transitive use of *rire*, with the meaning of 'express by laughter'.

Most of the other difficulties are due to the poet's extreme reticence in expressing more than is absolutely necessary. The words 'ton histoire' and 'héros' suggest only indirectly the amatory rôle claimed by the poet. The disturbing contact of any part of his beloved's body is evoked even more summarily by the circumlocution 'quelque gazon de territoire'. Turning to the second quatrain, it is only the association of 'péché' and 'victoire' that suggests his imaginary exploits, since 'naïf' cannot be properly interpreted until one knows what the poet wishes to convey. There is an undoubted tendency on the part of Mallarmé to pretend that his reader already knows what he is talking about and that he need merely complete the picture by allusion. No reference is made, for instance, to the sun and the sunset; when Mallarmé speaks of 'ce feu', the reader is expected to bridge the gap from his knowledge of the context.

The reader's task is often more difficult when analogy is involved. In his comparisons, the poet very frequently suppresses the first

term, which must be guessed at from the context. It is relatively simple to interpret 'glaciers' as the refusal of more intimate relations. One is not quite so sure of oneself in taking the 'royaumes épars' for stretches of purple-tinged cloud scattered over the sky. It demands no great effort to associate the vanishing wheel of the hero's chariot with the disc of the setting sun, but this effort is left to the reader. The expression of the final line, very successful, is a further indication of Mallarmé's unwillingness to make bald statements. He is reluctant to say 'mon char', preferring to select from a plurality of chariots which he apparently has at his disposal. There are many examples of this tendency in his work. Cf.:

Ouïr se révéler un peu

Le bois de mes diverses flûtes

(*Feuillet d'album*, p.59)

. . . aux vingt-quatre lettres comme elles se sont, par le miracle de l'infinité, fixées en quelque langue la sienne . . .

(*La Musique et les Lettres*, p.646)

The beauty of the poem resides largely in the final synthesis of the ideas and images presented. In all his other sun poems, Mallarmé takes the splendour of the sunset as his starting-point. The colours fade and vanish on the horizon, and the poet feels it is his duty to find in his immediate environment some appropriate visible symbol to perpetuate them. The sunset cannot be considered altogether as a triumph until he has succeeded in recreating it by analogy. So, when he begins his sonnet with the lines:

Victorieusement fui le suicide beau

Tison de gloire, sang par écume, or, tempête!

he is not satisfied until he finds a symbol of the vanished sunset in the blonde hair of his beloved, which he transforms into a 'casque guerrier d'impératrice enfant' to mark the consummation of the victory. In '*M'introduire dans ton histoire . . .*', the objective is the same, but the development of the ideas and images the exact opposite. The starting-point is the absence of any physical contact between the poet and his love, and this idea is developed into the imagined victories which reality denies the poet. He turns aside to contemplate the sky, and we know that he is seeking there some symbolic confirmation of his mental exploits. This preoccupation transforms the flaming disc of the sun, with its lavish colours, into the wheel of the victor's chariot. The development is similar to that of the *Coup de Dés* where, after the Hero's failure to cast the dice before sinking into the waves, the ideal dice-throw is suddenly

accomplished in the night sky, with the appearance of the seven stars of the Great Bear.

It is interesting to note that in almost all Mallarmé's sonnets the two tercets form a single sentence, leading up to the synthesis in the last lines. Various devices are used to strengthen the effect of the final analogy. Inversion places in the second line of the first tercet the reference to the hubs of the chariot although, at the time of reading this line, it is impossible to understand the allusion. The suspense is increased by the insertion of incidental phrases such as the third-last line, describing the clouds. And it is only in the final line that all these elements fall into place, 'pour que sorte une splendeur définitive simple',¹² with the image of the chariot.

Despite the limitations of the short line, which we tend to associate rather with the *vers de circonstance*, Mallarmé has managed to safeguard the subtlety of the idea and the undoubted poetry of the image. If a comparison were to be sought, it would surely be with *Sainte*, where the poet rejects the sensory recollection of music and even the written notation of it, in order to create, by analogy, a purely intellectual music of his own. One cannot but be sensitive to the personal note, however elusive, which brings to the little poem something of the charm of a letter to Méry:

. . . je t'assure que mes yeux ne regardent plus, loin de toi, le paysage comme naguère, parce que tu t'interposes toujours.¹³

NOTES

¹ Unless otherwise stated, page numbers refer to the volume of the *Œuvres complètes*, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, Gallimard, 1945.

² Kurt Wais, for instance, in his *Mallarmé: Dichtung, Weisheit, Haltung*, Munich, Ch. Beck, 1952, p.595.

³ See H. Mondor, *Mallarmé plus intime*, Gallimard, 1944, p.244.

⁴ Extracts from letters quoted by H. Mondor in *Mallarmé plus intime*, pp.243-5.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p.247.

⁶ Ch. Mauron, *Mallarmé l'obscur*, Denoël, 1941, p.195; see also Ch. Chassé, 'L'Erotisme de Mallarmé', in *Les Cahiers de la Lucarne*, March 1949, p.10.

⁷ I cannot share the interpretation given by J. Gengoux in *Le Symbolisme de Mallarmé*, Nizet, 1950, p.230: 'prendre la femme et assumer tout le passé de Vie qu'elle symbolise'.

⁸ *Richard Wagner*, p.546.

⁹ Ch. Mauron, in *Mallarmé l'obscur*, p.196, prefers to interpret this line as 'j'ignore le naïf péché (je ne connais que le péché honteux . . .)'.
¹⁰ *Solitude*, p.405.

¹¹ One could find an analogy, however, in the verb *soupirer*, which is used transitively to mean 'express by a sigh'.

¹² *Le Mystère dans les Lettres*, p.385.

¹³ Quoted by H. Mondor in *Mallarmé plus intime*, p.244.

LE 'CANTIQUE DE SAINT JEAN' DE STÉPHANE MALLARMÉ

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LE premier lecteur du *Cantique de saint Jean* fut Paul Valéry. Rappelé à Valvins le 6 octobre 1898, un mois à peine après les funérailles de Mallarmé, il avait été introduit dans la chambre mortuaire, où il put lire, avec le testament littéraire du poète, 'deux fragments presque finis d'*Hérodiane*, le dernier travail'. 'On m'a permis . . . de les lire, écrivit-il le lendemain à Gide. L'un est en strophes à la Banville (8.8.8.4), c'est le *Cantique de Jean*, l'autre une cinquantaine d'alexandrins; aucun vers ne m'est resté dans la tête, mais j'ai l'impression que *Le Cantique* est fort beau . . .'¹ Valéry s'est trompé sur la forme du poème (c'est 6.6.6.4 qu'il fallait dire); mais il a toutes les excuses ('Tu comprends que je manquais un peu de sang-froid,' confie-t-il à Gide). Et sur l'essentiel, à savoir la valeur du poème, il a vu juste: la postérité, elle aussi, a, non pas l'impression, mais la certitude, que '*Le Cantique* est fort beau'. Il mérite, croyons-nous, une étude attentive. C'est ce que nous voudrions ébaucher ici, en hommage au Maître cher et vénéré qui nous a initié, voici un quart de siècle, aux études mallarméennes.

Le *Cantique de saint Jean* ne semble pas avoir été prévu dans la première conception d'*Hérodiane*. Mallarmé, on le sait, a travaillé à cette oeuvre, conçue d'abord comme drame en trois actes, puis comme poème, entre octobre 1864 et le printemps de 1869. Gardant par devers lui l'*Ouverture* ébauchée, il envoya alors à Mendès la *Scène* dialoguée qui parut dans le second *Parnasse contemporain*, et abandonna pour longtemps, semble-t-il, le poème. Aucun des documents connus jusqu'ici ne mentionne le *Cantique* pendant cette première phase. En janvier 1886, Mallarmé laissa publier à nouveau, dans *Scapin*, la *Scène* dialoguée, qui devait également figurer en 1887 dans l'édition calligraphiée de ses *Poésies*. Mais en septembre 1886 il avait refusé ce fragment à la *Décadence* en expliquant qu'il comptait le compléter et 'en faire, avant peu, une plaquette'.² Selon René Ghil, Mallarmé travaillait dès 1887 à la continuation d'*Hérodiane*, envisageant alors un Prélude et un Finale. 'Le Prélude, rapporte Ghil, il m'en lut alors une soixantaine de vers peut-être. Ils étaient selon la théorie "instrumentale", conçus symphoniquement . . .'³ Ghil croit que le Finale était le *Cantique de saint Jean* mais affirme qu'il fut 'écrit très postérieurement' et

'purement dans la manière mallarméenne'.⁴ Il croit aussi que Mallarmé a détruit son Prélude 'par quelque rancune pardonnable envers la Poésie scientifique'! Tout ce que l'on peut retenir de ce témoignage suspect, c'est que vers 1887, Mallarmé pensait bien à compléter *Hérodiade*. Le Prélude lu à Ghil était vraisemblablement une partie de l'*Ouverture* ancienne, ébauchée pendant l'hiver de 1865-1866 et publiée par E. Bonniot en 1926: Mallarmé en parlait dès 1866 comme de 'l'ouverture musicale', et il a pu la lire à Ghil précisément pour montrer à celui-ci que ses théories étaient moins nouvelles qu'il ne le pensait.⁵ Ce qui est certain, c'est que le *Cantique de saint Jean* ne doit pas être confondu avec le Finale: car dans la *Bibliographie* que Mallarmé prépara en vue de l'édition Deman publiée en 1899, après sa mort, il est question de cinq parties: '*Hérodiade*, ici fragment, où seule la partie dialoguée, comporte outre le cantique de Saint Jean et sa conclusion en un dernier monologue, des Prélude et Finale qui seront ultérieurement publiés, et s'arrange en poème'.⁶ Or, c'est là la seule allusion que le poète ait jamais faite au *Cantique*, alors que les *Prélude* et *Finale* sont mentionnés aussi dans une lettre à Deman du 21 juillet 1896: 'Je vais achever, pour la rentrée, *Hérodiade* dont je publierai le *Prélude* et le *Finale*, de la dimension chacun du morceau existant, en deux fois, cet automne, dans la *Revue Blanche*'.⁷ M. Henri Mondor croit savoir que le *Cantique* existait déjà en 1896 et aurait pu figurer dans le numéro spécial de *La Plume*, du 15 mars 1896. Il dit du moins que ce poème 'est sur sa table, toujours repris et corrigé'.⁸ Quoi qu'il en soit, c'est à *Hérodiade* que Mallarmé a consacré ses derniers efforts de création au printemps et dans l'été de 1897 et de 1898. En septembre 1897, il écrivait à Vollard, qui lui proposait de publier une édition d'*Hérodiade* illustrée par Vuillard: 'Dites-lui, pour l'encourager, que je suis content du poème rallongé. Pour une fois c'est vrai . . .'.⁹ Le 11 mai 1898, il écrit à Madame Mallarmé: 'Je me suis sournoisement mis tout à l'heure à *Hérodiade*, avec espoir . . .'.¹⁰ Lorsqu'il mourra, le 9 septembre 1898, seul le *Cantique* pourra être publié comme un poème achevé: les autres ébauches de la suite d'*Hérodiade* publiées jusqu'ici comportent des lacunes considérables.

Le *Cantique* seul nous semble mériter le satisfecit que le poète s'accordait en écrivant à Vollard. Le sort a voulu que ce poème soit le chant du cygne de Mallarmé: en cela, le sort a été grand artiste. Car ici c'est un mort qui parle: 'Mallarmé fait dire à saint Jean ce qu'il sent et ce qu'il pense au moment de la décollation.'¹¹ Faire parler un mort était une gageure dont la difficulté n'échappait pas à Mallarmé. Commentant le poème de Poe, *Pour Annie*, il avait évoqué ce problème:

Voilà ce que fermées désormais à la parole, préféreraient les lèvres, où se pose et demeure l'énigmatique sourire funèbre. La réalisation de tel miracle poétique a été considérée par les experts, comme un défi que se posa le génie.¹²

Mallarmé a relevé ce défi et, à son tour, il a réalisé bien mieux que Poe ce 'miracle poétique' qui consiste à montrer 'l'état d'un esprit aux premières heures de la mort'.¹³ Il est vrai qu'il se borne là à l'instant fatal—'les sept strophes du *Cantique* ne comprennent que les quelques secondes que dure l'agonie'¹⁴—mais ainsi il fait éclater d'autant plus magnifiquement ce 'triomphe de la délivrance'.¹⁵

Un manuscrit du *Cantique de saint Jean*, merveilleusement calligraphié par le poète et représentant une mise au net à peu près définitive du texte, a été reproduit dans le numéro spécial de la revue *Le Point* consacré à Mallarmé.¹⁶ Selon toute vraisemblance, il s'agit bien du texte que Valéry eut sous les yeux en octobre 1898. Une ébauche comportant de nombreuses variantes dans le texte et entre les vers a été publié par le regretté Henry Charpentier dans le numéro spécial de la revue *Les Lettres*.¹⁷ Les variantes, on le verra, aident à résoudre certains problèmes d'exégèse et à rectifier certaines erreurs faites par des commentateurs qui n'en avaient pas eu connaissance. Il faudra, sans doute, la publication de tous les fragments laissés par Mallarmé pour être sûr de la portée exacte du *Cantique* et de sa place dans le poème. Ce que nous proposons ne serait qu'une exégèse provisoire, sans perdre de vue que le *Cantique* suffit pour faire comprendre le dénouement du poème tout entier, sous le titre définitif des *Noces d'Hérodiade. Mystère*. Nous verrons quelles devaient être ces mystérieuses noces. C'est le *Cantique* qui livre la clef de l'énigme.

* * *

Déjà dans la première ébauche, Mallarmé avait choisi comme armature au poème une comparaison entre le soleil et la tête du Saint. Mais il s'agissait d'abord d'un coucher de soleil, le soleil mourant analogue à la mort du Saint : c'est là une comparaison assez banale. Voici cette version de la première strophe :

L'astre bas que prolonge
Mal un pompeux mensonge
Certes aujourd'hui choit
Funeste et froid¹⁸

Lorsque le soleil décline, il laisse derrière lui la vaine splendeur du ciel occidental : ce 'pompeux mensonge' ne conserve qu'imparfaitement la lumière de l'astre qui tombe sous l'horizon. Et 'aujourd'hui'

le coucher du soleil est particulièrement 'sinistre' ou 'funeste', car il coïncide avec la décollation du Saint, et son 'froid' annonce celui de la mort.

Mallarmé vit pourtant qu'il existait une analogie bien plus subtile entre la course du soleil et la carrière du Saint. L'image définitive se trouve en germe dans un passage des *Dieux antiques*, publiés en 1880. Mallarmé y évoque

Sisyphé, le hautain, dont le châtiment, dans le Tartare, est de rouler vers la cime d'une colline une pierre qui retombe immédiatement : de même que *le soleil doit descendre aussitôt qu'il a atteint le plus haut lieu de sa course par les cieux*.¹⁹

Ce phénomène se reproduit chaque jour à midi : mais il est un moment où le soleil atteint l'apogée de sa course annuelle : c'est le midi du solstice d'été, moment où le soleil atteint son plus haut point et semble y faire une 'halte surnaturelle' avant de retomber, aussitôt après, 'incandescent' de sa chaleur estivale. Or, la fête de saint Jean (24 juin), coïncide à peu de jours près avec le solstice d'été (21 juin); et c'est de cette coïncidence que Mallarmé a tiré l'image essentielle de son poème. M. Charles Mauron a, le premier, signalé ce rapport, dans son excellente exégèse du poème : il en décrit ainsi la structure :

On n'y trouve donc qu'une seule grande métaphore qui rapproche d'une part la trajectoire solaire, d'abord ascendante, puis descendante après une halte imperceptible, hésitation au point culminant et moment d'exaltation suprême (c'est le sens même de solstice)—et d'autre part la trajectoire tracée par la tête de saint Jean à l'instant de la décollation.²⁰

Voici la version définitive de la première strophe, dont le sens est désormais clair :

Le soleil que sa halte
Surnaturelle exalte
Aussitôt redescend
Incandescent

Il a donc suffi de dix mots pour évoquer ce point culminant de l'évolution solaire et pour poser le premier terme de la métaphore qui identifiera implicitement l'essor miraculeux du soleil que suit sa rechute immédiate, avec l'apothéose et la mort du Saint. Il y a aussi là un merveilleux trait d'imagination : car la 'halte surnaturelle' du soleil a une autre raison. Comme Madame Noulet le fait remarquer, 'le soleil semble s'arrêter au moment où l'on meurt, sorte de métonymie qui prête à l'objet les sensations du sujet'.²¹

Ces sensations sont évoquées avec une vigueur hallucinante dans la strophe qui suit :

Je sens comme aux vertèbres
S'éployer des ténèbres
Toutes dans un frisson
A l'unisson

C'est le moment même de la décapitation. Rien de plus sinistrement évocateur que ces quelques mots. *S'éployer* est un mot recréé par Mallarmé à partir de l'adjectif *éployé*, utilisé dans le langage héraldique pour désigner un aigle aux ailes étendues. Littré dit : 'Le verbe éployer n'est pas usité; il pourrait l'être sans peine, et l'on dirait très-bien : Un aigle qui éploie ses ailes'. Mallarmé a dit encore mieux : 's'éployer des ténèbres' pour exprimer l'invasion brutale et soudaine de l'esprit par la nuit de la mort. La répétition de la sibilante dans 'frisson' et 'unisson' évoque à la fois le sifflement de la faux et le frisson du corps supplicié.

La version primitive de cette strophe diffère peu de son état achevé :

Je ressens aux vertèbres
Exulter les ténèbres
Toutes à l'unisson
De ce frisson²²

Si l'euphonie a pu dicter au poète le remaniement du premier vers, le sens du second est indiscutablement devenu plus saisissant par la substitution du verbe *s'éployer*, d'ordre plus concret, au verbe *exulter*, plus apparemment abstrait. *S'éployer* figurait d'ailleurs comme variante dans cette première version. Les deux dernières rimes ont beaucoup gagné à la transposition. Rien de plus passionnant que de suivre le spectacle du 'hasard vaincu mot par mot' à travers ce jeu de substitutions.

Voici le texte définitif des troisième et quatrième strophes :

Et ma tête surgie
Solitaire vigie
Dans les vols triomphaux
De cette faux

Comme rupture franche
Plutôt refoule ou tranche
Les anciens désaccords
Avec le corps

Ici commence une proposition principale qui gouverne tout le reste

du poème. Elle se ramifie volontiers, et c'est là que l'absence de ponctuation risque d'amener des malentendus. Ainsi M. Mauron écrit: 'Si le poème était ponctué, il y aurait un point après la quatrième strophe. Au début de la cinquième, "Qu'elle" marque une exclamation—"elle" désignant la tête."²³ Faudrait-il vraiment couper ainsi la phrase, en laissant 'plutôt' en l'air? Réduite à son armature syntactique, la période comporte une proposition dominante recouvrant une proposition comparative, laquelle commande à son tour la conclusion:

Et ma tête . . . plutôt refoule . . . les anciens désaccords . . .
qu'elle ne s'opiniâtre à suivre . . . son pur regard . . .; mais . . .
elle penche un salut.

Que 'elle' s'applique bien à 'tête', c'est évident; mais n'en déduisons pas que la conjonction 'que' marque une exclamation: elle dépend de 'plutôt' et sert à introduire une proposition comparative. Madame Noulet, qui a bien vu que 'ma tête' est sujet de 'refoule' et de 'tranche', tombe dans la même erreur que M. Mauron lorsqu'elle affirme que 'le saint formule le souhait que sa tête suive la direction de son regard'.²⁴ Pur contresens, comme nous le verrons en examinant ces strophes.

La troisième traduit par de magnifiques images l'essor momentané de la tête du Saint. La tête 'surgit' comme une 'solitaire vigie', comme un matelot posé en sentinelle à la hune d'un navire: solitude et élévation spirituelle de celui qui 'plane sur la vie'.²⁵ Cependant la faux s'élance comme une aile sinistre dans ses 'vols triomphaux'. Pourquoi une faux, au lieu de la hache ou du glaive traditionnels? Mallarmé tenait sans doute à la rime avec 'triomphaux': mais il y a aussi la circonstance que la Saint-Jean est l'époque de la fenaison, et surtout que la faux est l'insigne consacré de la Mort. Mallarmé a hésité longuement sur cette image, mettant provisoirement 'heurts', 'coups', 'chocs', avant de se fixer sur 'vols'. De même, il avait mis d'abord 'orgueilleuse' au lieu de 'solitaire'. Mais la fin du poème exprimera l'humilité essentielle du Saint: d'où probablement la modification. Le mot 'triomphaux' est riche de sens: la faux semble triompher, mais le vrai triomphe est celui du Saint, car la mort le libère et, très exactement, l'achève.

La quatrième strophe explique pourquoi la mort est une libération pour le Saint. Sa tête qui surgit dans cette 'rupture franche' de la décollation supprime du coup 'les anciens désaccords avec le corps'. Du moment que le vieux verbe 'refouler' signifie, d'accord avec le bon Littré, 'faire refluer en arrière', il n'y a aucune raison d'y voir une anticipation à la théorie freudienne du 'refoulement', d'autant que le Saint a une parfaite conscience de ses conflits.

'Trancher' est magnifiquement choisi, étant riche de sens littéraires et figurés qui se rapportent pleinement au contexte. Le paradoxe essentiel c'est qu'ici le *patient* devient l'*agent*. La tête tranchée tranchant à son tour, cela met en œuvre toutes les acceptions du terme: 'couper, ôter, interrompre comme par le fer'; 'décider, résoudre'; 'abréger, couper court, mettre brusquement fin' (Littré toujours). Quels sont ces 'anciens désaccords'? Pour cet Essénien, aspirant par l'ascèse à la vie essentielle de l'esprit, le corps représente un élément discordant, un obstacle. Il n'est que de se souvenir des paroles de l'Apôtre: 'Mais je vois une autre loi dans mes membres, qui combat contre la loi de mon esprit, et qui me rend captif sous la loi du péché, qui est dans mes membres. Misérable que je suis! qui me délivrera de ce corps de mort?'²⁶ On voit déjà combien saint Jean est près d'Hérodiade qui, elle aussi, souffre des mêmes 'désaccords avec le corps'. Cette ressemblance se précise dans les deux strophes qui suivent:

Qu'elle de jeûnes ivre
S'opiniâtre à suivre
En quelque bond hagard
Son pur regard

Là-haut où la froidure
Eternelle n'endure
Que vous le surpassiez
Tous ô glaciers

Le Saint déclare que l'envol de sa tête tranchée met un terme à l'antagonisme du corps et de l'esprit plutôt qu'il n'exprime l'effort de s'élever aux 'altitudes lucides' rêvées pendant sa vie.²⁷ La version primitive de la cinquième strophe ne permet plus le doute: 'plutôt . . . que' introduit bel et bien une comparative, confirmée dans cette version par la présence de l'expletif 'ne', que, pour des raisons poétiques, Mallarmé a choisi de supprimer:²⁸

Qu'elle ne voudra suivre
Lourde ou de jeûnes ivre
' Aux abîmes hagards
Ses seuls regards²⁹

Le sens, on le voit, est le même: mais c'est un art très sûr qui dicte le choix définitif. Chaque variante serait à commenter: bornons-nous à signaler la force de 'pur' remplaçant 'seuls', de 's'opiniâtre', venu après de nombreux tâtonnements, et l'effet de dépouillement obtenu par l'abandon de l'épithète 'lourde', de l'allusion aux 'abîmes', devenue inutile puisque la strophe suivante doit les

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évoquer, et enfin des pluriels que remplace si efficacement le singulier.

Dans son envol, la tête ne s'opiniâtre pas, ivre de jeûnes, à suivre dans un bond sauvage la direction de son propre regard : c'est pourquoi nous la verrons retomber humblement à la fin du poème. Comme nous l'avons vu, la mort transporte le Saint d'emblée dans le royaume de son idéal.

La version définitive de la sixième strophe représente aussi une grande avance sur la version primitive, que voici :

Là-haut où leur très pure
Aile jamais n'endure
Que vous les surpassiez
Vous ô glaciers³⁰

Ici le doute plane sur l'appartenance de cette 'très pure aile'. Est-ce celle des 'regards' de la strophe précédente? C'est ainsi que le prend M. Kurt Wais qui s'attache, pour cette partie de son exégèse, à la version primitive, ne donnant qu'entre parenthèses la leçon définitive.³¹ Est-ce celle des 'abîmes'? La version finale enlève toute équivoque. Le 'pur regard' du Saint se dirige vers le royaume de son idéal : les hauteurs du ciel, où règne un froid éternel dépassant le froid des glaciers. Mais cette région, nous la connaissions déjà : n'est-ce pas celle que désirait une autre héroïne, cette Hérodiade impatiente de sentir dans sa 'chair inutile'

Le froid scintillement de ta pâle clarté
Toi qui te meurs, toi qui brûles de chasteté,
Nuit blanche de glaçons et de neige cruelle!

Cette rencontre n'est nullement un hasard : c'est sans contredit le motif du dénouement du poème. Nous sommes ici au cœur de la pensée de Mallarmé. Nous y reviendrons après examen de la septième et dernière strophe du poème. La voici, d'abord dans sa version définitive :

Mais selon un baptême
Illuminée au même
Principe qui m'élut
Penche un salut

La tête retombe, après sa brève ascension. Le Saint s'aperçoit que le baptême de sa mort illumine sa tête de l'auréole du martyr.³² Or, ce baptême est conforme au même principe d'ascétisme qui fit de lui un élu, qui détermina sa première vocation. Apaisée par la certitude que sa mort est le couronnement de sa vie, la tête du

Saint retombe comme si elle se 'penchait' dans une humble salutation.

La première version de cette strophe offre quelques variantes intéressantes :

Mais sous quelque baptême
Illuminée au même
Délice qui m'élut
Verse un salut³³

La progression qui mène de 'sous quelque baptême' à 'selon un baptême', en passant par 'par quelque baptême' caractérise la méthode de Mallarmé, lequel avait une prédilection pour la préposition 'selon'.³¹ Remarquons que 'principe' n'a été retenu qu'après l'abandon à tour de rôle des mots 'délice', 'arcane', 'miracle', et 'mystère'. Moins suggestif, 'principe' est plus exact : c'est la preuve que pour Mallarmé le 'sens' n'était pas si 'indifférent' qu'il l'a parfois affirmé.³² Relevons enfin la variante 'verse un salut', qui a le double sens de 'se penche en saluant' et de 'répand le salut', ce qui préfigure le 'salut' final d'Hérodiade.

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Nous voilà plus près d'entrevoir le dénouement du poème d'*Herodiade*. Le monologue de l'héroïne se termine sur l'attente angoissée d'une 'chose inconnue'. Or Mallarmé lui-même ne savait pas, au moment où il composait la *Scène* publiée dans le second *Parnasse contemporain*, quelle serait cette 'chose inconnue'. Une note, retrouvée dans ses papiers, et qui date de sa maturité, contient cet aveu précieux :

Quant au monologue—au pourquoi de la crise indiqué [sic] par le morceau—j'avoue que je m'étais arrêté dans ma jeunesse. Je le donne, ce motif, tel qu'apparu depuis, m'efforçant de le traiter dans le même esprit.³⁵

Une autre note analogue indique que Mallarmé avait fini par y voir clair : 'Je me rendis compte du *motif* dont l'ignorance m'avait fait interrompre ce poème'.³⁷ Quel était donc ce motif mystérieux ? Robert de Montesquiou nous apporte la réponse :

Le secret . . . je le tiens du poète lui-même, n'est autre que la future violation du mystère de son être par le regard de Jean qui va l'apercevoir, et payer de la mort ce seul sacrilège; car la farouche vierge ne se sentira de nouveau intacte et restituée tout entière à son intégralité, qu'au moment où elle tiendra entre ses mains la tête tranchée en laquelle osait se perpétuer le souvenir de la vierge entrevue.³⁸

Ce renseignement a tout l'air d'être authentique, mais il reste sur le plan extérieur. Ce que Montesquiou ne dit pas, c'est la portée symbolique des faits. Pour la comprendre, il faut se reporter en arrière, à l'époque où Mallarmé concevait l'Œuvre de sa vie.

Rappelons d'abord deux phrases essentielles de la lettre bien connue de juillet 1866, dans laquelle Mallarmé expose à Cazalis ses projets :

Je te dirai que je suis depuis un mois dans *les plus purs glaciers* de l'Esthétique—qu'après avoir trouvé le Néant, j'ai trouvé le Beau.—et que tu ne peux t'imaginer dans quelles *altitudes lucides* je m'aventure. Il en sortira un cher poème auquel je travaille, et, cet hiver (ou un autre) *Hérodiade*, où je m'étais mis tout entier sans le savoir, d'où mes doutes et mes malaises, et dont j'ai enfin trouvé le fin mot, ce qui me raffermira et me facilitera le Labeur . . .

En réalité, Mallarmé ne devait trouver que plus tard le 'fin mot', ou plutôt, il lui arrivait de le perdre et de le retrouver tour à tour. Retenons notamment les 'glaciers' et les 'altitudes lucides', le fait qu'il s'était 'mis tout entier sans le savoir' dans *Hérodiade*, et enfin 'qu'après avoir trouvé le Néant' il avait 'trouvé le Beau'. L'été suivant, il fait part à Cazalis, dans une lettre datée du 14 mai 1867, de son ambition suprême :

Ainsi, je viens, à l'heure de la Synthèse, de délimiter l'œuvre qui sera l'image de ce développement [celui de 'l'Univers Spirituel']. Trois poèmes en vers, dont *Hérodiade* est l'ouverture . . .⁴⁰

Trois jours plus tard, il explique à Lefébure, le vrai confident de sa pensée, quel était ce 'développement' que son œuvre devait évoquer :

La Vénus de Milo— que je me plais à attribuer à Phidias, tant le nom de ce grand artiste est devenu générique pour moi, la Joconde du Vinci, me semblent, et *sont*, les deux grandes scintillations de la Beauté sur cette terre —et cet Œuvre, tel qu'il est rêvé, la troisième.

Mallarmé voyait ces trois jalons comme les phases successives d'une triade hégélienne, qu'il expose ainsi :

La Beauté complète et inconsciente, unique et immuable, ou la Vénus de Phidias, la Beauté ayant été mordue au cœur depuis le christianisme par la Chimère, et douloureusement renaissant avec un sourire rempli de mystère, mais de mystère forcé et qu'elle *sent* être la condition de son être. La Beauté, enfin, ayant,

par la science de l'homme, retrouvé dans l'Univers entier ses *phases corrélatives*, ayant eu le suprême mot d'elle, s'étant rappelé l'horreur secrète qui la forçait à sourire—du temps du Vinci, et à sourire mystérieusement—souriant mystérieusement maintenant, mais de bonheur et avec la quiétude éternelle de la Vénus de Milo retrouvée ayant su l'idée du mystère dont la Joconde ne savait que la sensation fatale.⁴¹

Revenons à *Hérodiane*. Nous avons vu que saint Jean, par sa vie comme par sa mort, parvient au but où tend également l'aspiration d'abord inconsciente de la vierge. Or saint Jean violant par son regard le mystère de l'être d'Hérodiane, ce mystère se trouve précisément violé par celui-là qui peut le mieux le saisir, et qui même le saisit mieux qu'Hérodiane. En conséquence, la synthèse finale réside dans l'union mystique d'Hérodiane et du principe spirituel du Saint, principe symbolisé par sa tête tranchée et libérée de toutes ses entraves terrestres. Telles devaient être *Les Noces d'Hérodiane. Mystère*. Merveilleuse synthèse 'hégélienne'! Le sanctuaire spirituel d'Hérodiane, momentanément violé, retrouve sa pureté primitive sur un plus haut niveau de conscience, et cela, grâce précisément à celui-là même qui y avait porté atteinte. C'est exactement là ce mouvement de la triade exposé à Lefébure, comme devant être à la base du Grand Œuvre rêvé. Ainsi, à travers les fragments d'*Hérodiane* 'scintille', selon les espérances de Mallarmé, 'l'authenticité glorieuse' du Livre inconnu, montrant les phases successives de la Beauté: Beauté sereine, Beauté troublée, et enfin Beauté parfaite, retrouvant sa sérénité après avoir 'su l'idée du mystère'. Achevé la veille de sa mort, ce morceau, qui se situe dans une des régions supérieures de son art, représente le vrai testament spirituel du poète.

NOTES

¹ André Gide-Paul Valéry, *Correspondance 1890-1942*, Paris, Gallimard, 1955, p.335. Cf. aussi A. Thibaudet, *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé*, Paris, Gallimard, 1926, p.391: 'Un fidèle ami du poète, qui eut connaissance de plusieurs papiers laissés, me dit que 'le cantique de saint Jean, en sept strophes, est le chant de la tête coupée, volant du coup vers la lumière divine. Une trentaine d'alexandrins précèdent, qui proclament le plat dans lequel paraîtra le chef du Décollé, et une trentaine suit, bien moins achevés.

—Le 'fidèle ami' du poète est Valéry, qui dit aussi: 'Le *Cantique* même est singulier dans l'œuvre de Mallarmé, ne fût-ce que par le rythme qui nulle part ailleurs ne se retrouve.'

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- ² Stéphane Mallarmé, *Œuvres complètes*, 'Bibliothèque de la Pléiade', Paris, Gallimard, 1945, p.1442. Nous désignons ce volume par le sigle OC.
- ³ René Ghil, *Les Dates et les Œuvres*, Paris, Crès, 1923, p.227.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p.227-8.
- ⁵ S. Mallarmé, *Propos sur la Poésie*, Recueillis et présentés par Henri Mondor, Monaco, Editions du Rocher, nouv. éd. 1953, p.65. (Désigné ci-après par le sigle PP).
- ⁶ OC, p.77.
- ⁷ OC, p.1443.
- ⁸ H. Mondor, *Vie de Mallarmé*, éd. complète en un vol., Paris, Gallimard, 1946, p.726 (Sigle VM).
- ⁹ VM, p.791, date précisée grâce à OC, p.1444.
- ¹⁰ VM, p.788. Cf. p.789, lettre du 14 mai 1898: 'Journée de travail, *Hérodiade* ira lentement, mais ira, je me possède un peu'.
- ¹¹ E. Noulet, *La Poésie de Stéphane Mallarmé*, Paris, Droz, 1940, p.485.
- ¹² OC, p.243.
- ¹³ *Ibid.*, p.244.
- ¹⁴ E. Noulet, *op.cit.*, p.485.
- ¹⁵ OC, p.244.
- ¹⁶ Nos. XXIX-XX, février-avril 1944, p.17. Relevons quelques variantes minimales: str. II, v.3: *comme* au-dessus de *dans*; str. III, v.3: *heurts*, puis *chocs* au-dessus de *vols*; str. V, v.1: *ivres*, lapsus? str. V, v.3: *bon*, certainement lapsus pour *bond*; str. VII, v.1: *ce* au-dessus d'*un*.—Rappelons que le *Cantique* fut publié pour la première fois en 1913, dans l'édition NRF des *Poésies*.
- ¹⁷ No. III, 1948, p.19-20. Nous relevons les variantes au cours de notre exégèse du poème.
- ¹⁸ *Les Lettres*, p.19. Variantes: v.1: *épars* pour *bas*; 2: *riche* pour *pompeux*; 3: *à l'instant* pour *aujourd'hui*; 4: *sinistre* pour *funeste*.
- ¹⁹ OC, p.1245; cf. p.1226: 'Le séjour d'Ixion dans la maison de Zeus représente alors la longue pause que semble faire l'astre au haut des cieux, à midi.'
- ²⁰ C. Mauron, *Mallarmé l'obscur*, Paris, Denoël, 1941, p.110. Cette explication figurait déjà dans les commentaires que M. Mauron a contribués à la traduction anglaise, par Roger Fry, des poèmes de Mallarmé (Londres, Chatto & Windus, 1936). Dans son *Introduction à la Psychanalyse de Mallarmé* (Neuchâtel, A la Baconnière, 1950), M. Mauron rapproche le *Cantique* du poème en prose *Pauvre Enfant Pâle* et voit dans les deux poèmes la hantise de la castration (p.130-135).
- ²¹ *Op.cit.*, p.485.

¹² *Les Lettres*, p.19. Variantes: v.1: *Et j'éprouve pour Je ressens*; 2: *S'éployer pour Exulter*.

²³ *Mallarmé l'obscur*, p.111.

²⁴ *Op.cit.*, p.486. De même Wallace Fowlie, *Mallarmé*, Londres, Dobson, 1953, p.141, et P. G. Castex et P. Surer, *Manuel des Etudes Littéraires Françaises*, Paris, Hachette, éd. en 1 vol., 1954, où cette erreur dépare une explication de texte par ailleurs remarquable. De même aussi J. Gengoux, *Le Symbolisme de Mallarmé*, Paris, Nizet, 1950, p.119.—Charles Chassé, lui, a une interprétation tout à fait originale: il croit que le poème a été inspiré à Mallarmé par *Apparition*, le tableau de Gustave Moreau, 'Elle', dit-il, 'c'est Salomé qui (et là, c'est le tableau de Gustave Moreau qui nous facilite la compréhension du *Cantique*) suit du regard la tête se déplaçant dans l'espace et montant vers le ciel glacé dans un halo de gloire' (*Les Clefs de Mallarmé*, Paris, Aubier, 1954, p.186). Mais 'Elle' n'est certainement pas Salomé, et le *Cantique* n'est pas une 'transposition' fidèle de l'aquarelle de Gustave Moreau. Ce tableau, toutefois, exposé au Salon de 1876 et longuement décrit, ainsi qu'une peinture à l'huile du même sujet, par Huysmans dans *A Rebours* (1884), a pu alimenter les rêveries de Mallarmé. Cf. une de ses notes publiées par H. Mondor, VM, p.777: 'J'ai laissé le nom d'Hérodiade pour la différencier de la Salomé je dirai moderne ou exhumée avec son anecdote polychrome, la danse, etc., l'isoler comme l'ont fait des tableaux solitaires dans le fait même, terrible, mystérieux, et faire miroiter, ce qui probablement hanta ou apparut, le chef du saint, dût la demoiselle constituer un monstre'. -L'aquarelle de G. Moreau a été reproduite dans Bédier et Hazard, *Hist. de la litt. fr.*, éd. rev., t. II, p.348.

²⁵ Pour le sens du mot *surgir*, voir A. R. Chisholm, *Towards Hérodiade*, Melbourne University Press, 1934, p.149-50, qui montre comment ce seul mot suffit à exprimer tout 'l'angélisme' du Saint.—Pour le mot *vigie*, cf. Castex et Surer, *op.cit.*, p.903: 'Le mot *vigie* est justifié, car les yeux du martyr demeurent ouverts.'

²⁶ Saint Paul, *Epître aux Romains*, VII, 23-24 version Ostervald.

²⁷ PP, p.77—C'est un contresens que de croire que la tête s'élève 'là-haut'. Cf. Guy Michaud, *Mallarmé, l'homme et l'œuvre*, Paris, Hatier-Boivin, 1953, p.167: 'il montre [le poète] s'élevant, selon un rythme implacablement victorieux, jusqu'au lieu de la froideur éternelle, mais aussi du "baptême" qui l'illumine, puisque alors il a rejoint le "Principe qui l'élite", c'est-à-dire le Néant—ou l'Absolu.'

²⁸ Cf. Maurice Grevisse, *Le Bon Usage*, Gembloux, J. Duculot, 6e éd., 1955, p.752.

²⁹ *Les Lettres*, p.20. Variantes: v.1: pour *voudra*, trois mots en surcharge: *pourra, saurait, n'osera*; v.4: *purs* pour *seuls*.

³⁰ *Ibid.* Variantes: v.1: *Jusques* pour *Là-haut*; v.2: *éparse* pour *jamais*; v.4: *Aucuns* pour *Vous ô*.

³¹ Kurt Wais, *Mallarmé*, Munich, C. H. Beck, 1952, 2e éd. remaniée, p.173.

³² K. Wais croit que la tête du Saint est illuminée par le fait qu'il a baptisé le Christ (*op.cit.*, *ibid.*). Mais Mallarmé ne suit nullement la tradition biblique. Il le dit, d'ailleurs: 'Du reste, je tiens à en faire un être purement

Le 'Cantique de saint Jean' de Stéphane Mallarmé

rêvé et absolument indépendant de l'histoire' (voir H. Mondor, *Eugène Lefébure*, Paris, Gallimard, 1951, p.341, lettre de février 1865).—D'autre part, Ch. Chassé évoque deux hypothèses: 'Le poème s'achève, peut-être, sur l'affirmation que Salomé, en contemplant la tête coupée est, à son tour, saisie de la grâce; elle est baptisée par le sang du martyr et elle s'incline devant le Dieu qui a choisi saint Jean comme son messager . . . Le sujet de "penche" est "elle" (autrement dit Salomé) à qui s'applique aussi "illuminée", au féminin. Une autre interprétation également défendable serait que "ma tête" est le sujet de "penche un salut" et qu' "illuminée" s'applique aussi à "ma tête".' (*op.cit.*, p.186). —Pour J. Gengoux, *op.cit.*, p.119, 'ce principe, c'est le Verbe, la pensée de Dieu, symbole pour Mallarmé de la Pensée qui se pense ou éternité du Néant.'

³³ *Les Lettres*, p.20. Variantes: v.1: *par* pour *sous*; v.3: *pour délice*, trois mots en surcharge: *arcane*, *miracle*, *mystère*; v.4: *penche* pour *verse*.

³⁴ Cf. Jacques Scherer, *l'Expression littéraire dans l'œuvre de Mallarmé*, Paris, Droz, 1947, p.124: *selon* a ici le sens d'en vertu de . . .

³⁵ Cf. *Le Mystère dans les Lettres*, OC, p.382.

³⁶ OC, p.426.

³⁷ Note de Mallarmé publiée par E. Bonriot dans son article 'La Genèse poétique de Mallarmé d'après ses corrections', *la Revue de France*, 15 avril 1929, p.643-4. Cette note n'a pas été recueillie dans OC. M. Henri Mondor ne cite dans VM, p.740, que la phrase qui fait suite, et qui traduit, semble-t-il, une objection que Valéry aurait faite à Mallarmé lors d'une visite à Valvins dans l'été de 1896: 'dangereux de compléter mûr un poème de jeunesse—mais il était suffisamment en avance sur moi, quand je le fis, pour qu'aujourd'hui je n'aie pas trop à reculer en arrière.'

³⁸ Robert de Montesquiou, *Diptyque de Flandre, Triptyque de France*, Paris, R. Chiberre, 1921, p.235.

³⁹ PP, p.77. C'est nous qui soulignons.—Le 'cher poème' est très probablement *l'Après-midi d'un Faune*.

⁴⁰ PP, p.88.

⁴¹ *Eugène Lefébure*, p.349. Ce passage essentiel ne figure pas dans les extraits de cette lettre publiés dans PP, p.90-94. Mallarmé interprète la Joconde un peu comme le fera Walter Pater dans son célèbre essai sur Léonard, publié dans son volume *Studies in the History of the Renaissance* (1873). Cf. d'autre part le quatrain consacré à Léonard par Baudelaire dans *les Phares*:

Léonard de Vinci, miroir profond et sombre,
Où des anges charmants, avec un doux souris
Tout chargé de mystère, apparaissent à l'ombre
Des glaciers et des pins qui ferment leur pays . . .

A READING OF VALÉRY'S 'PALME'

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THE parable is hardly a popular mode of expression in twentieth century poetry and is more likely to evoke ideas of pious didacticism than of a vital concentrated discourse. In *Palme*¹ however Paul Valéry has written one of his finest poems in which a parable, religious in tone and touched with the certainty of grace, brings with it, as every good parable must, both delight and illumination.

It is well to remember that although *Palme* was the only occasion on which Valéry made use of the parable in his *Poésies*, this particular poem enjoys a privileged position, being placed at the end of *Charmes* as the crowning song of triumph with which the volume concludes and containing as it were a sum of experience. Fortunately we know something of its origin. It was written, Valéry tells us, at the same time as *Aurore* when the long efforts of composing *La Jeune Parque* were over. He likened his state of mind at that time to the freeing of a person's feet of leaden boots: 'On a ôté des bottes plombées, et l'on danse'.² He felt 'en état de virtuosité aiguë', 'comme si la raideur et la longueur de (son) effort étaient récompensées par une légèreté et une aisance qui ne peuvent succéder qu'à quelque entraînement rigoureux et volontaire'.³ *Palme* and *Aurore* came as joyful songs after the three or four years' intense work which had been put into the composition of the *Parque*.

Both these poems were not only conceived at the same time but, according to Valéry's own testimony, originally formed a single poem. This may surprise us for the total effect of each poem is quite different; nevertheless an examination of their structure supports the poet's statement. First of all, of course, there are identical schemes of versification, nine 10-lined stanzas of heptasyllables rhyming *ababccdeed*. The disposition of rhymes, not without relationship to that of the sonnet, allows a marked forward surge until the last line restores the balance. Secondly, a comparison of the language found in the poems shows a suggestive parallelism. Noteworthy for example is the frequent use of key-words ending in *-ance* or *-ence*.

Aurore
apparence
je m'avance
confiance

Palme
abondance
attirance
espérance

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prudence	substance
commencent	patience (3 times)
présences	silence
transparence	chance
Espérance	pense
	dépense

It will be seen that the number of cases is quite remarkable and indicates a close connection between the poems. However, even here we notice a diversity of atmosphere. Only one of the above-mentioned words is to be found common to *Aurore* and *Palme*: *espérance*, but whereas *Aurore* concludes with the vision of Hope rising from the waters, *Palme* will reject its own proudly won goal. Thus the former poem moves passionately to one point, from *apparence* to *transparence* and *espérance*; *Palme* on the other hand realizes the paradox that *patience* and *chance* go together, *pense* and *dépense*. Certain other traits of similarity should be noted, such as 'Les oracles de mon chant' (*Aurore*) which recalls the oracle that the palm-branch becomes for itself: 'A soi-même sert d'oracle'; while the long expectancy that waits on the ripening fruit (*Palme*) is also evoked in *Aurore*: 'Tout calice me demande Que j'attende pour son fruit.'

It is evident then that we discover many elements which show the intimate connections between these two poems and their common origin. But that in no way alters the fact that tone, movement and theme are vastly different in the definitive versions. *Aurore* remains the portrayal of a masculine will which refuses ideas and violates nature, *Palme* of a period of germination and fruition, the morning enthusiasm having become a mature steadiness and assurance. Above all, the apparent disorder of the awakening consciousness turning its attention from object to object contrasts with the calm contemplation of a single object of beauty that we find in *Palme*.

Yet, we may ask, why should Valéry have chosen the palm-branch as the theme of this parable? The symbolic connotations immediately come to mind, in both Greco-Roman and Judeo-Christian traditions, as the victor's prize and as the sign of thanksgiving. The palm-branch suggests also of course, by its etymology, by its very shape, the image of the open hand—by which we both receive and give, as the branch of the poem will both give and gain. We may think also of the importance of tree images in Valéry's poetry, providing him with a constant source of wonderment. This multiplicity of explanations which converge on the beautiful image of *Palme* would seem sufficiently evident. One may however ask

whether Valéry was not in some way influenced in his adaptation of the image by a reading of what is doubtless the most accomplished evocation of the palm-branch before his own. Paul Claudel's prose-poem which opens *Connaissance de l'Est*:

La palme est l'insigne du triomphe, elle qui, aérienne, amplification de la cime, s'élançant, s'élargissant dans la lumière où elle joue, succombe au poids de sa liberté. Par le jour chaud et le long midi, le cocotier ouvre, écarte ses palmes dans une extase heureuse, et au point où elles se séparent et divergent, comme des crânes d'enfants s'appliquent les têtes grosses et vertes des cocos. C'est ainsi que le cocotier fait le geste de montrer son cœur. Car les palmes inférieures, tandis qu'il s'ouvre, jusqu'au fond, se tiennent affaissées et pendantes, et celles du milieu s'écartent de chaque côté tant qu'elles peuvent et celles du haut, relevées, comme quelqu'un qui ne sait que faire de ses mains ou comme un homme qui montre qu'il s'est rendu, font légèrement un signe. La hampe n'est point faite d'un bois inflexible, mais annelée, et, comme une herbe, souple, longue, elle est docile au rêve de la terre, soit qu'elle se porte vers le soleil, soit que, sur les fleuves rapides et terreux ou au-dessus de la mer et du ciel, il incline sa touffe énorme.⁴

It is obvious that we are unable to prove whether Valéry, consciously or unconsciously, was influenced by Claudel. The reader will nevertheless not fail to note certain points of resemblance which, if not conclusive, reveal a curious series of coincidences. 'Succombe au poids de sa liberté' in particular recalls *Palme* with its continual tension between heaviness and lightness; likewise 'comme un homme qui montre qu'il s'est rendu' (cf. Valéry's 'beaux abandons'), and the trunk swaying between sky and earth ('soit qu'elle se porte vers le soleil, soit que . . .') evokes the pliant palm 'entre l'ombre et le soleil'. These traits, as well as a number of separate words, remind us forcibly of Valéry's poem. On the other hand we need to remember that Valéry composed with the material of images, wherever he found them, a structure whose perfection of form, language and tone constitute the poem that he alone was capable of writing. It will be our object now to describe the organization of *Palme* in detail.

The opening lines already establish the tone of this parable:

De sa grâce redoutable
Voilant à peine l'éclat . . .

Bounty, awe, light, gentleness are our first impressions. From now until the end of the poem this tone, an essentially religious one,

will be maintained as the palm-branch waits on the gods and all the paradoxes of imagery—since the atmosphere in which the poem moves is that of the miraculous—become quite natural. This tone is also conveyed by the introduction during the first stanza of a second voice by which the main discourse is expressed, that of an angel. The miraculous speaker chooses the most wholly natural of objects for its theme, making us feel grace in direct terms. An inevitable forward movement will be unfolded, a metaphor of germination will culminate in triumphant fruition.

The description contained in the first seven lines and forming the prelude to the angel's monologue prefigures the future development of the whole poem:

De sa grâce redoutable
Voilant à peine l'éclat
Un ange met sur ma table
Le pain tendre, le lait plat;
Il me fait de la paupière
Le signe d'une prière
Qui parle à ma vision . . .

We are plunged into the religious atmosphere of the gift. This bounty offered by an angel is that of which the poet has most need, a simplicity of substance, fresh milk and bread, plain evidence of nature's goodness. There is nothing less apparently miraculous than the form of this food, but it brings into the intimacy of the poet's room the gentle sign, the knowledge that he has been desiring. To his attentive vision it appears as the clear manifestation of loving care, as the invitation to a prayer of meditation and thanksgiving. The rest of the poem, which contains the parable, will repeat this same movement of gift, acceptance and joyful knowledge.

The last three lines of the first stanza introduce the image of the palm-branch:

—Calme, calme, reste calme!
Connais le poids d'une palme
Portant sa profusion!

The message appears as a necessary one to the reader, not only by the preparation we find in the previous lines, but because of the obligatory character of the rhyme, *palme* and *calme*. (Valéry uses the word *palme* in only two other poems of his collected work and in both cases the rhyme is with *calme*: *Anne* in the *Album de Vers anciens* and *La Caresse* in *Pièces diverses*). The subject of the parable is established and so is its symbolic importance; we have now only to wait in order to see the unfolding of the act of patience

and its transformation of a branch into a palm of victory and praise. Before leaving these opening lines we should mention a stumbling-block for many readers, the combination *lait plat*. Gide tells us in his *Journal* that he originally found the epithet too startling but later reversed his opinion. 'Il fallait tout le génie de Valéry pour inventer (cette épithète). Il fallait, pour la mériter, l'aspect si particulier du lait dans la jatte, son opacité, sa matité, sa blancheur, etc. . . .; une épithète qui ne convenait à aucun autre liquide ne pouvait être qu'excellente.'⁵ This is more than ample justification, but Gide might also have mentioned the rightness of sound (the alliteration of *p* and *l* throughout the stanza, the constant use of back *a* *grâce*, *redoutable*, *éclat*, *table*, etc); above all the very impression of flatness which Valéry is evoking here, consonant with the invitation to calm, and in contrast with the extremes of height and depth found later in the poem. The epithet thus gives us an excellent example of the language of Valéry's poetry: not only is the particular use highly relevant to the immediate sense, but also to the organic necessities of the whole composition.

The second stanza evokes the branch accepting its fruit, bending towards them as a mother, adapting itself to their growth. They do not constitute an extraneous adjunct but are the unifying, integrating element of the branch's activity.

Pour autant qu'elle se plie
A l'abondance des biens,
Sa figure est accomplie,
Ses fruits lourds sont ses liens.

The visual image of the branch enfolding its fruit is also felt as submission to an inner law, like the perfect work of art which also presents a 'figure . . . accomplie' and whose ornament (*fruits lourds*) is inseparable from its substance. A form is present to us in all its completeness in these words, but the next lines remind us that the branch is alive, developing, moving in an apparent immobility. Time is spatialized by a daring simile, and the slow movement of growth, always in harmony with the palm's own nature, cuts through the moment (*divise le moment*) as if time were a solid thing which now enjoys a perfect balance of forces, or stillness. In the same way a constant balance has been established between the opposing forces of gravity—that of earth and of heaven. The branch waits, but does not struggle, reconciling in evident and concrete manner (*sans mystère*) the call of the earth and the necessity of patient ripening.

The branch becomes personified in the third stanza as a judge

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and a sybil responsive to all things yet discovering control and equilibrium.

Ce bel arbitre mobile
Entre l'ombre et le soleil.
Simule d'une sybille
La sagesse et le sommeil . . .

Between earth and sky, sunshine and shadow, wisdom and sleep the branch moves, recognizing like the Pythia the rights of both clear-sightedness and of imperious yet hidden presences. Its gentle swaying between these twin poles continues untiringly, with no trace of haste, in a domain where welcome and farewell, beginning and ending, are equally solicitous. Yet the branch surrenders neither to regret nor to desire and unfaltering, undefiled, yet without any rigidity, it is worthy of that final joy which is to come, the touch of the gods.

The vision of ripening plenty now becomes music in response to the movement of the breeze. First of all a murmur of golden sound is heard (the synesthesia of visual and auditive images effects the transition from sight to sound: 'L'or léger qu'elle murmure') then a touch as on a cymbal ('Sonne au simple doigt de l'air')—a finger which is as it were the first contact of the 'main des dieux' evoked in the previous stanza. This sound brings about an immediate change in the surroundings, which here become explicit for the first time. The palm is in a desert, but the very lightness of sound which emanates as it is moved by the breeze will cover this desert with a seductive armour of silk (reminding us of the veil of the angel in Stanza 1).

L'or léger qu'elle murmure
Sonne au simple doigt de l'air
Et d'une soyeuse armure
Charge l'âme du désert

The contrast is obvious between the opposing forces of heaviness (suggested by *armure* and *charge*), and lightness (*léger*, *simple doigt de l'air*, *soyeuse*); as well as between bareness (*l'âme du désert*) and the rich clothing of silk. We might also suggest that *armure* can be thought of as continuing the musical metaphor, being a term used for the key-signature, and signifying the movement in unison of the palm and its natural surroundings. Although the terms, if isolated, conflict, no conflict is felt here for the palm is the meeting-place of paradoxes. This we feel also in the lines which follow. The breeze has now become a wind which strikes against the branch, yet the grains of sand it carries do not dry the fruit but

come as a fertilising shower (*arrose*). The branch continues its patient expectation and, like the poet, produces a personal expression in response to its own internal laws and also to the influence of the outside world. The voice is not however the full poem, the ripe fruit, but the prophecy of the future like the mother's confidence in the unborn baby she carries within her. The song the branch sings is the self-caressing sureness of the coming fruition which gives sense and beauty to every present affliction.

Cependant qu'elle s'ignore
Entre le sable et le ciel,
Chaque jour qui luit encore
Lui compose un peu de miel.

Although it is sure of the future, the branch, like the poet composing his poem, does not know the exact form that the final fruit will take, yet an inevitable accretion is progressing. The vision of the palm becomes more overtly sensuous as the swelling sap increases with each day, each warm sun. Time furthers this process, and is in turn itself absorbed into a 'divine durée', an eternity where days become one with the inner sweetness of the palm. Not time, but a maturing love will result. The intimacy of this stanza will thus conclude at the centre of the generative activity as we taste and smell the moistness of all the forces of love—'La circulation des sèves inouïes' of Rimbaud:

Dans un suc où s'accumule
Tout l'arome des amours.

A variation of tone is found at the beginning of the sixth stanza. The words, instead of being concentrated on the instant development of the branch and its fruit, become general and point a moral. The angel puts its message in terms which more directly state the relevance of the parable and, in doing so, change the mode of address from the third person to the general 'on', then to the second person singular, the form in which the voice had first been interpreted in Stanza 1. Tears may come without bringing as in *La Jeune Parque* and *La Pythie* the dawn of a solution, the loving form may be found niggardly (*sous ombre de langueur*) and all our hopes appear unfounded. Yet there is indeed a presence preparing a gift of precious worth, leading it forth with solemn wisdom to the light. The insistent rhymes of the first six lines of the stanza, which all end on the same consonant, yield to a joyous movement of sound, while *désespérer* is balanced by *espérance éternelle*, *larmes* by *sève solennelle*, *sous ombre de langueur* by *tant d'or et d'autorité*.

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This image of a mounting Hope which annuls all despair is continued in the next stanza. At those very moments when the palm feels nothing but a sense of loss and desert emptiness, an unseen activity is moving among the roots and along every inch of the tree. Energies work in the darkness, are chosen and espoused by these same shades. The outward appearance is calm but within an act of violent love is taking place. The palm, like the poem, draws its substance from a violation of its own secret sources of nourishment, by rape as well as by patient expectation. Ardent love is constantly being felt by the evocation of an irrepressible force (*ne peut s'arrêter jamais, travaillent, poursuivre*), by the metaphor of the roots like the hair of a beloved mistress that the shades of the earth have chosen for their own, by the brutality of the ravishing (*jusqu'aux entrailles du monde*):

La substance chevelue
Par les ténèbres élue
Ne peut s'arrêter jamais
Jusqu'aux entrailles du monde
De poursuivre l'eau profonde
Que demandent les sommets

At the beginning of the eighth stanza the violence of the preceding lines has disappeared. A thrice-repeated call to patience echoes the three invitations to calm of the first stanza. After three stanzas which have spoken of the hidden waters (*suc, sève, eau profonde*), we return to contemplate the palm in the clear sunlight (*dans l'azur*) and are conscious that the supreme moment of fruition is near.

Patience, patience,
Patience dans l'azur!
Chaque atome de silence
Est la chance d'un fruit mûr!

Silence is visualized, our expectancy is heightened by the continued internal rhymes in *-ence*. And we know that this moment shall come: 'Viendra l'heureuse surprise'. The inversions convey the certainty of the promise, yet *surprise* tells us that it will still come as a happy discovery. What will be the final act which will detach the fruit? None can know beforehand. Perhaps the gentle and pure coming of a dove, or the breeze, the slightest of movements, the touch of a woman—'Une femme qui s'appuie'—suggestive of an ideal beauty and also of love: any one of these can precipitate the shower of fruit which the sap has slowly composed. The rain is bounteous, triumphant, and none could foresee, not

even its creator, this precise beauty. The detachment has come with the gratuitousness of grace and the only reaction possible is one of awe and gratitude—'où l'on se jette à genoux'.

The palm-branch knows its joy now as the future tense changes to the present. We might expect a certain regret for the loss of that 'figure accomplie' which had come through patience but the answer is that this fruit, this people formed of our own self, must be separate and fall irresistibly away.

Qu'un peuple à present s'écroule,
Palme! . . . irrésistiblement!
Dans la poudre qu'il se roule
Sur les fruits du firmament!

The palm must give, allow its creation to join the other fruits which have fallen to the ground. It is only when the creator has given that he realizes the more completely the truth that there is no loss, for he finds new lightness. The fruit was long carried as an essential part of his being, but he has reached new freedom for he exists without his fruit, while having in addition the intimate experience of its development. There is a certain tone of disdain in these lines, the detachment of the rich man who, although he has lost one form of abundance, now enjoys another more rare.

Tu n'as pas perdu ces heures
Si légère tu demeures
Après ces beaux abandons;
Pareille à celui qui pense
Et dont l'âme se dépense
A s'accroître de ses dons!

The palm-branch is compared to the human creator, thus underlining the parable. Like the thinker, the palm has shown, as Valéry wrote in his *Notion générale de l'art*, that 'nous pouvons . . . disposer de nos forces pour façonner une matière indépendamment de toute intention pratique, et rejeter ou abandonner ensuite cet objet que nous avons fait; cette fabrication et ce rejet étant au regard de nos nécessités vitales, identiquement nuls'.⁶ Mental activity, which is internal abundance, and a weight which is borne as the fruit (Latin *pensare*), produces its mature expression, loses its burden (*se dépense*), and by so doing, like the hidden waters of sap which are released, the self attains to a knowledge of its own freedom.

'Un poème est une durée pendant laquelle, lecteur, je respire une loi qui fut préparée . . .' The basic law of *Palme* is a law of grace. More than in any other of Valéry's poems we feel the release

from violence and a movement from germination to fruition. The tone is confident, sure of the gods' goodness, relating all things to a natural bounty.

The structure consists of a series of lines of discourse which are disposed around the central theme of grace. The dramatic sequence in its simplest form is the gradual ripening of the fruit. It runs parallel to the metaphor of fluidity, which contrasts with the desert and dust that surround the tree: the angel brings a gift of milk, the wind nourishes the tree (*arrose*), a flow of sap is continuing (*suc, sève*) which draws on other more secret waters (*l'eau profonde*), until the plentiful result is seen and the rain overwhelms us with its favour (*cette pluie/ Où l'on se jette à genoux*) –reminding us of the myth of Danaë whom the father of the gods visited in a golden shower. Another striking development is that of the victory over gravity, of heaviness (*poids, charger, lourd* and the etymologically related *penser*) which resolves itself into lightness (*léger, dépenser*). In the same way loss will become gain: and the calm flatness of the first stanza (*lait plat, calme, reste calme*) will be seen as a rising force (*monte*) moving from extreme depths (*jusqu'aux entrailles du monde*) to issue forth as rain, after which the last stanza will return to an equilibrium (*si légère tu demeures*.)

We could add to these movements a number of others which are contained within the poem: *chagrin* will resolve itself into joy, despair into hope, emptiness into fullness, rigour into tenderness, while time and eternity will no longer be opposed:

Sa douceur est mesurée
Par la divine durée
Qui ne compte pas les jours,
Mais bien qui les dissimule
Dans un suc où s'accumule
Tout l'arome des amours.

In *Palme* we find a structure where nothing is lost, each dissident force bringing its strength and virtue to its opposite. The branch is poised between these extremes, the enemy of rigidity, the solution of contrasts, and its beauty results from its response to a deviation and triumph over it. Claudel, it will be remembered, described such use of paradox in these terms: 'Le bouquet épuise par le mouvement toutes les ressources de l'immobilité.'

There are certain other aspects of structure which need to be noted. Each of the nine stanzas has a separate role in the creation of the total effect, presenting a whole scale of emotions, appealing to different parts of the body (for example, the violence of the use of 'entrailles' in St.7), balancing or completing another stanza

(thus the mass of St.2 and the lightness of St.9). A further remarkable structural characteristic of this poem is the constant repetition of the act of giving—the angel gives, but so does the branch, the wind, time, the earth, the thinker; it is an echo in the individual details of the central pattern of grace.

Finally we need to observe the curve which is described by the complete poem, for the straight line will in the end turn away from its object, that which has been sought is surrendered. The branch will rejoice to be free of its fruit as the thinker of his thought. There is departure and return but, instead of loss, beauty, knowledge, independence have been gained.

Few readers, I think, will need to be convinced of the exquisite force of this structure. Some may well ask however what can be the relation of the attitude presented in *Palme* to Valéry's own. Can this parable of grace be the sincere expression of the supposed enemy of inspiration? The answer is of course yes. The grace which is described and exalted in *Palme* is not unbridled enthusiasm --which alone was what Valéry rejected—but that gentle force which will be channelled into the waiting form. Nothing appears to us more personally Valéry's than this image of the palm-branch. Just as the diamond or the night sky well symbolize the world of Mallarmé's poetry, so the branch and its fruit figure that of Valéry—a natural development which has drawn on the hidden parts of the poet's self and which has become detached only after it has reached full maturity. His work always presupposes submission to the poem's own principle of growth which in turn springs from its author's deepest personality. This, I take it, was what Alain meant when he wrote of Valéry in his commentary on *La Jeune Parque*: 'Ce poète est le plus naturel de ceux que j'aie lus. Nul moins que lui n'a forcé l'inspiration; nul moins que lui n'a rimé malgré Minerve.'

Placed at the end of *Charmes*, *Palme* offers a completely satisfying conclusion to the volume. Not only does it present a parable of the creative process, not only do we find the delight of the author when his work reaches the point of maturity, but it also expresses the independence, the detachment of the self which is able to reject its own most precious fruit. By his gift the poet realizes, proves his own freedom. This poem, and all the preceding ones of *Charmes*, are then seen as exercises which have enabled the poet to attain self-discovery and control over language, but which, their virtue as exercises exhausted, can now be surrendered. And so the ardent desire to possess and violate that we find in *Aurore* has its equipoise in the mature renunciation of *Palme*, like the two voices of a dialogue which is pursued across the intervening poems.

NOTES

¹ P. Valéry: *Poésies*, Gallimard, 55e édition, 1942, pp.200-204. *Palme* was published for the first time in the *Nouvelle Revue Française* in June 1919, without variants. The poem is dedicated to Jeannie, that is to say, Madame P. Valéry—a fact which has inspired some critics, anxious to reduce every poetic expression to a personal anecdote, to interpret the 'ange' as the author's wife. For example: 'L'épouse calme la nervosité de l'écrivain, qui songe aux difficultés de l'œuvre accomplie' (*Pages choisies de Valéry*, edited by H. Fabureau, Hachette, 1952, p.86).

² Letter to Paul Souday, 1929, published in *Lettres à Quelques-uns*, Gallimard, 1952, p.182.

³ F. Lefèvre: *Entretiens avec P. Valéry*, p.62.

⁴ P. Claudel: 'Le Cocotier', *Œuvres complètes*, vol. 3, NRF, 1952, pp.12-13.

⁵ A. Gide: *Journal*, Gallimard, 1933, p.1158.

⁶ 'Notion générale de l'art', *Nouvelle Revue Française*, 1935, t. xlv, cclxvi, p.685.

⁷ *La Jeune Parque commentée par Alain*, Gallimard, 9e édition, 1953, p.17.

THE SPANISH CLASSICAL THEATRE

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THE sixteenth and seventeenth centuries were a period of tremendous interest in the drama, and consequently one of extraordinary dramatic creativeness. During the Middle Ages the theatre had been almost completely religious in its inspiration and orientation, though with the passing of time much secular material came to be included, notably in the plays performed by the craft guilds, and in some of the French *jeux*, for instance the *Jeu de Robin et de Marion*, which probably evolved from dialogue dance-songs, we can detect the first faint stirrings of romantic drama. With the Renaissance, however, new life was infused into the theatre, and two new influences made themselves felt:

Roman, rather than Greek, drama, Plautus and Terence representing comedy, Seneca tragedy.

Greek and Roman pastoral poetry, as represented by Theocritus, Virgil, and their imitators.

Broadly speaking, this quickening of dramatic activity took effect in two fields:

The Universities (one recalls the Oxford and Cambridge 'University wits') and the colleges, particularly the Jesuit colleges of Italy, France, Spain, and later Germany and Poland.

The troupes of travelling players, whom we find appearing in great numbers in Italy, England, the Netherlands, and Spain.

It was undoubtedly in England and in Spain that the Renaissance drama reached its greatest heights; and it is significant that in each country the strolling players, with their popular appeal, conditioned subsequent developments, and that the permanent theatres which they eventually constructed largely absorbed and popularised the learned drama of the intellectuals. For some time, however, both English and Spanish troupes had no permanent homes and only a minimum of equipment.

Cervantes describes for us the theatrical equipment of a company of strolling players in the primitive days of the Spanish drama:

The whole apparatus of the manager was contained in a large sack, and consisted of four white shepherds' jackets, turned up with leather, gilt and stamped; four beards, and four sets of hanging locks; four shepherds' crooks, more or less . . . The theatre was composed of four benches arranged in a square, with five or six boards laid across them, providing a platform a few feet from the ground . . . The furniture of the theatre was an old blanket drawn aside by two cords, making what they call a tiring-room, behind which were the musicians, who sang old ballads, without a guitar.

What development, in stagecraft or in literary qualities, was possible while the theatre was like that? If drama was not to die in its infancy, progress on the material and technical sides was a necessity. It was not long in coming.

In England the strolling players produced their plays in the inn yards, and the structure of the inn yard provided the plan of the Elizabethan theatre; similarly in Spain, the theatre of the Golden Age found its model in the *corrales*, or courtyards, of cities such as Madrid and Seville, and preserved throughout, in both name and form, indelible traces of its origin. Let us imagine a *corral*-production. The impromptu theatre is enclosed by walls of houses, windows and balconies providing 'boxes' for the privileged; the stage, made of planking more or less as described by Cervantes, is at one end; opposite are some tiers of benches for gentlemen, while above these is the *cazuela* or 'stewpan', a wooden gallery for women of the poorer classes. In 1574 a troupe of Italian players was performing in such an improvised theatre in Madrid; but

within eight years (in 1579 and 1582) two permanent theatres, still significantly named *corrales*, had been erected—the *Corral de la Cruz* and the *Corral del Príncipe*. In these permanent theatres there was a long narrow stage without a front curtain, but with a curtained recess or inner stage at the back which could be used for an inner chamber, a hut, a cave, or a cell; above the stage was a gallery serving for the upper window of a house, a city wall, the poop of a ship, castle battlements, or even (as in *La Vida es Sueño*) for a mountain-top in Poland. The identity of basic design between this and the English Elizabethan theatre is most striking, and suggests for both countries an unusual harmony of dramatic development, popular demand, and technical progress.

From our modern point of view such a theatre has many disadvantages, the principal one being the absence of scenery, but it is at least open to question whether the use of stage scenery has really contributed to an advance in writing and construction—not to mention the standard of acting. Later, in the seventeenth century, scenery and stage-machinery came into use, and Lope de Vega, whom no one would call a diehard conservative, complained that the spirit was going out of drama: 'when the managers,' he wrote, 'avail themselves of machinery, the poets avail themselves of the carpenters, and the auditors of their eyes.' Yet in the old Spanish theatre, as in its English counterpart, appeal to the eye was by no means lacking; in both theatres it was provided by magnificent costumes and energetic action, the effect being a 'continually moving panorama of kaleidoscopic colours'. Moreover, as a result of the growth of the radio play as a dramatic form, we know something today that the older critics did not know: that to a competent playwright the absence of visual appeal can be, not a drawback, not even a challenge to his skill, but a positive advantage. So we find, in both English and Spanish plays intended for the sixteenth- and early seventeenth-century theatre, certain excellences that derive directly from the type of theatre in use: magnificent poetry full of the richest imagery, and a continual challenge to the audience to use its imagination to the full.

Spain and England, too, were alike fortunate in two other respects. One was that in each country everybody, from aristocrat down to the humblest artisan, had a lively interest in the drama; the other was that Spanish and English writers, unlike those of France and Italy, were not dominated by the 'unities' which the academic theorists had deduced, unwarrantably enough, from classical sources. As a result both Golden Age and Elizabethan plays are vivid, romantic and flamboyant, and aim at pleasing every class of society.

Let us consider, then, what kinds of plays in Spain were written for this very satisfactory type of theatre. The following is a suggested classification that includes practically every surviving play.

CAPE-AND-SWORD COMEDIES ('comedy', by the way, as in Shakespeare, means not a rollicking farce but a play with a happy ending). This species derives its name from the typical out-of-doors costume of the sixteenth-century Spanish gentleman. The stock themes are love and honour, and the plots are as a rule exceedingly complicated. Two or three young men court as many ladies; jealous fathers and brothers intervene, and make concealment necessary; duels abound, problems of honour (some of great complexity) arise at frequent intervals. Entanglement is added to entanglement, until at the end mutual explanations clear up the misunderstandings and a series of marriages takes place. Though the framework of these plays is so stereotyped the stories are always interesting and abound in unexpected turns and tricks—duels, hidings in unlikely places, secret chambers, houses with two doors, veiled ladies, muffled gentlemen—while the honour-dilemmas provide some surprisingly subtle psychological problems. Calderón, with his love of intricacy and his insight into human nature, is the great master of this type of drama, his *Casa con dos puertas mala es de guardar* being a well-known example, though Lope and indeed all the other playwrights cultivated it also.

PALACE COMEDIES. These are similar to the cape-and-sword comedies, but deal with persons of a higher social level. The scene is often set in remote and fantastic places—Bohemia, Poland, Russia—and shows as noble a disregard for geographical detail as we find in Shakespeare; 'Illyria', the sea-coast of Bohemia, and the *Tiger* sailing to Aleppo would all fit admirably into a Spanish context. Foreign sovereigns and the higher nobility figure largely in these plays, of which the greatest master is Tirso de Molina.

PHILOSOPHIC DRAMA. Plays of this sort would naturally attract a rather limited audience, and so they are not very numerous, but in *La Vida es Sueño*, perhaps the most famous of all Spanish plays, Calderón managed to construct out of an old Eastern story a play of universal appeal. A king has kept his son in squalid isolation; as an experiment, the prince is drugged and taken to the palace, where he is allowed for a limited time to act as if he were king; his arrogance and brutality first amuse, then horrify everybody; he is drugged again, taken back to his prison and chained. Upon awakening, he cannot tell which is dream and which is reality; but reflection on his 'dream' and some subsequent experiences

teach him that an effort of the will can change his heart and win him mastery over himself, and in the end he is redeemed and transformed.

HISTORICAL COMEDIES. Among these we find some of the noblest plays in Spanish literature. The acknowledged master in this *genre* is Lope de Vega, who has given us an extensive portrait-gallery of grave, simple, virtuous heroes of old Spain, reminiscent of Livy's sketches of ancient Roman worthies. He derives his material from old books and from the mediaeval ballads, but he excels in depicting not only heroes but also minor characters—he is particularly fond of peasants. Lope's *Fuenteovejuna*, in which the whole village of that name bands together and accepts corporate responsibility for the killing of a licentious noble—each one, even women and boys, maintaining under judicial torture that it was Fuenteovejuna itself and no one individual that committed the murder—is one of the best of the historical plays.

DEVOUT, OR RELIGIOUS, COMEDIES. These are plays based on sacred history or the lives of the saints, and were, as may be imagined, numerous and popular. A typical example is Calderón's *El mágico prodigioso*, based on the legend of St Cyprian of Antioch: Cyprian, while yet a pagan, falls in love with a Christian maiden, but on making no progress with her he comes to an arrangement with the devil, who promises to force her to yield to his desires. However, she cannot even so be prevailed upon, and is handed over to execution as a Christian; but at the last moment Cyprian, who has fallen into despair, has a change of heart, declares himself a Christian, and shares the crown of martyrdom with her.

COMEDIES BASED UPON ITALIAN SHORT STORIES. In the sixteenth century these Italian sources were universally popular in Europe; we have only to think of *Romeo and Juliet*, *Othello*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, and many other Elizabethan plays. Lope de Vega made extensive use of the Italian stories—there is extant a Romeo-and-Juliet play of his, in which all the characters of Shakespeare's masterpiece are present and recognisable, and in which the famous balcony plays its full part; but the story has a happy ending, and the action culminates in an elopement, a *fait accompli* which results in an all-round Montague-Capulet reconciliation. Lope also based plays on the early Spanish classic *La Celestina* (a robust and outspoken work from the transition-period between Middle Ages and Renaissance which deeply influenced both Cervantes and the Elizabethans), and on *Don Quijote* itself. Calderón found some of

his material in Old French romances of chivalry; other popular sources were *Bandello*, and the various romantic epics of the cycle of Orlando (Roland).

HONOUR TRAGEDIES. In these is seen the full expression of the morbid preoccupation with horror and sin that makes up the gloomy side both of Golden Age and of Elizabethan consciousness. All sorts of things can be blamed for it: bullfighting and *autos-da-fe* in Spain, in England bearbaiting, cockfighting and bloody public executions of men widely believed to be innocent of any crime; but it is perhaps more reasonable to suppose that these things themselves are but symptoms of some much more profound malady. It is true to say that the Golden Age and the English Renaissance were still sufficiently in touch with their mediaeval origins to have retained a deep sense of sin; and they both knew at least as well as Aeschylus that sin, unless fully repented and atoned for, leads inevitably to further sin and to ultimate ruin, in this world and the other. Now in Spain this consciousness became complicated by something else—the code of honour. Under the peculiar conditions imposed by the centuries-long struggle against the Moors the Christian chivalry of Spain (the source from which spring the piety, devotion and loyalty, and also the hardness, that are fundamental to the Spanish character) found itself so situated that each knight as an individual had to show the most complete integrity and trustworthiness in all circumstances; and it followed that even the slightest and most unintentional word or action impugning this integrity was a deadly insult. So far, good enough; but at this point the honour-dialectic leaves the path of reason and morality, for the elaborate code which was evolved—far too elaborate to discuss in detail—demanded that the insult be wiped out in a duel.

From the beginning the Church realised that there was *something* very wrong about duelling, quite apart from the deplorable way in which it was thinning the ranks of the nobility; but for some time there were not lacking theologians who tried to justify the duel by the principle *scienti et volenti non fit iniuria*, by which, for instance, a gambler who, knowing the risk, willingly stakes his money and loses it in a fair-and-above-board contest cannot complain of injustice. But the shallowness of this argument was before long exposed by this consideration: just as the gambler does wrong in staking money that does not belong to him, or money that (even though it be his) is held only in stewardship for his family and household, so also the duellist does wrong in gambling with his life, which belongs not to himself but to God. The Church therefore finally condemned duelling outright, excommunicating all who took

any part in it: but this condemnation had a very odd and unforeseen consequence. The *hidalgos*, instead of accepting the Church's ruling, remained attached to the code of honour and to the duel, and this attachment was most wrong-headedly viewed as a further proof of valour: it had been indeed courageous to risk one's life in defence of one's honour, but now the duellist risked not only his life but his immortal soul as well! . . . Surely *la razón de la sinrazón* could go no further than this.

In considering some situations that are dealt with in the honour-tragedies, we must remember not only the honour-dialectic outlined above, but also the then universal belief in the necessity for atoning for sin. Suppose now that a man's wife commits adultery: what is her husband to do? The code of honour had a clear answer: fight a duel with the adulterer, kill him if possible. But has not the wife still to atone for her fault? Very well, kill her too. However, since all this was incidentally illegal and was punished by the King with great severity, the outraged husband was apparently considered entitled to adopt any subterfuge to defend himself against the law—provided that in so doing he did not compromise his honour. This ugly business furnished the dramatists, especially Calderón, with material for some cold-blooded and horribly fascinating plays, and it was in order to be able to make sense out of these plays that we have had to discuss the honour-dialectic in some detail. Thus, in *A secreto agravio secreta venganza* an old man has a young wife, who is carrying on an amour with his son by a previous marriage. On discovering this, the old man has his wife confined in a darkened room, and tells his son that in this room is someone who has smirched his honour and so must be killed. Because of his father's age the son is compelled to assume this obligation; he does so, and unknowingly kills his paramour, whereupon the father cries out to the servants that their mistress has been murdered. They rush in and kill the son, and *honour is satisfied*. Again, in *El médico de su honra* a nobleman finds his wife writing a letter in which she emphatically rejects immoral proposals that have been made to her by a young gallant. Paradoxically (Cervantes' *razón de la sinrazón* again) this is as great a blow to the husband's honour as if she had yielded, for Caesar's wife must be above the slightest breath of suspicion, and who is to say that she had not (even unintentionally) given the young rascal some grounds for hope? Accordingly he has his wife drugged, and then has a doctor brought in blindfolded and makes him bleed her to death; the doctor is then blindfolded again and escorted out. It is difficult to say what was the attitude of the playwrights to this mentality, but it is very difficult to imagine either Lope or Calderón giving it unreserved approval. One sug-

gestion is that they tried to demonstrate its evils by showing the inhuman horrors to which it could lead; but against this we must set the undoubted fact, borne out by the English evidence also, that in the period we are discussing the sense of horror was not nearly so highly developed as it is today.

The next two classifications need not detain us long; they are:

MYTHOLOGICAL COMEDIES, rather like the masques of Jacobean England: they were court plays, characterised by elaborate costume, scenery and music, an extensive use of stage machinery, and a very free treatment of mythology.

ENTREMESES, OR FARCES. These were amusing one-act plays, intended to be performed between the acts of a three-act drama, and corresponded roughly to the Greek satyric play, the Elizabethan jigg, and the Japanese *kigen* which is appended to a programme of Nō plays. The best entremeses are those by Cervantes, though curiously enough he did not excel in other types of drama.

Finally, there are

AUTOS SACRAMENTALES, in honour of the feast of Corpus Christi, a feast very dear to Spaniards from its origin in the thirteenth century up to the present day. On these *autos* all possible resources of art, music, costume and poetry were lavished, even when the royal treasury was in grave difficulties, and high fees were paid to the dramatists; Calderón, at the height of his career, received the then considerable sum of 5800 *reales* for two *autos* (*real*, by the way, has given Modern Irish the word *réal*, meaning sixpence). Practically any subject whatever could serve for an *auto*, and it was the playwright's task to allegorise it so that it had some reference to the Blessed Sacrament. Sometimes an existing play was 'made over'; thus Calderón, having achieved a brilliant success with *La Vida es Sueño*, turned it into an *auto*. Naturally a certain straining, occasionally rather absurd, was sometimes inevitable; in an *auto* based on the rape of Helen and the sack of Troy the characters are allegorised thus:

Helen is a lost soul carried off from her husband Menelaus (Christ) by Paris (the Devil). Christ, inspired by Sinon (Divine Love!) succeeds in recapturing Helen. Priam is God; Hecuba, the Divine Idea; Apollo, Eternal Wisdom; Hector, the World; Peleus and Thetis, Adam and Eve.

Well!—But the best of the *autos* are very good literature indeed, and a discriminating reader has no difficulty in appreciating them, from the simple freshness and beauty of Tirso de Molina's *Col-*

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menero Divino to the lyric magnificence, sumptuous imagery, and Old-Testament grandeur of Calderón's *autos*. The *autos*, by the way, were produced not in the theatre but on *carros* drawn by decorated oxen with gilded horns, and while every town and every small hamlet had *autos* of its own, those of Madrid were of course the most magnificent. In the capital each *auto* was performed at least four times: before the King, before the councillors of Castile, and before the people. While waiting, the crowd was amused by the giant puppets, *gigantones y cabezudos*, and the dragon *tarasca*, which still survive in some Spanish towns and are described with photographs in Sacheverell Sitwell's book on Spain.

In conclusion we must mention something that can at first prove an obstacle to a reader's enjoyment, especially of Calderón, namely *culteranismo* or learned speech, which can become particularly difficult when allied to *conceptismo*, a straining for subtlety that often becomes mere obscurity. These are found also in the English literature of the period, and are there called 'euphuism', from John Lyly's famous *Euphues or the anatomy of wit*. This form of speech was carried to astonishing lengths in Spain by the poet Luís de Góngora and his school, and left an indelible mark on the whole of seventeenth-century literature; and a similar cult of subtlety and intricacy is found in the music and the painting of the period. Here are some examples of 'conceits', all from Calderón:

a ship is a comb, combing the white locks of the ocean.

a swimming man is a ship: his arms are the oars, his legs the rudder, his nose the prow, his eyes the two navigation lights (at this stage one wonders whether the port eye is red, the starboard green).

a man hears in a wood the groans of an injured person; the voice attracts him, and so becomes a magnet then a compass, thus, in searching for the injured one, he steers his course towards the 'north pole' of the voice.

flowers are songless birds, birds are scentless flowers.

In the opening lines of *La Vida es Sueño* Rosaura, thinking of her horse's speed, addresses him as

. . . *rayo sin llama,*
pájaro sin matiz, pez sin escama

('ray of sunlight without flame, bird without coloured feathers, fish without scale'). One is oddly but irresistibly reminded throughout of the *kennings* of Old Norse literature, for instance the description

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of winter as the *path-thong's sorrow* (path-thong = thong-like object that glides across your path = snake: snake's sorrow = winter); and it is significant, if hardly encouraging, that the modern Icelanders, the natural custodians of this sophisticated skaldic poetry, have forgotten the meaning of many of the *kennings*. Is this style of speech Arabic in origin and diffused through Catalan and Provençal, or is it Celtic?

There, then, is an all too brief and summary sketch of the Spanish drama of the Golden Age. It is a romantic and tremendously vital drama, full of the blood and the breath of life, clothed in the rich red and gold of a profound and sincere religious faith, but disfigured by the tattered black rags of an exaggerated and degenerate code of honour. It is a drama alike of action and of thought: the cloak swirls and billows to the clash of swords and the clear plucked notes of the guitar, but at the same time the deepest mysteries of human thought are mercilessly analysed, and men and women find their way to ruin or redemption through a maze of logical and moral subtleties. It has no real kin in Italy or in France: its only true blood-brother is the equally noble and vital drama of Elizabethan England.

ASPECTS OF 'AVANT'

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THE true history of a given word can only be determined by a close examination of its phonetic and semantic environment step by step in time and space. Viewed in this light the study of one word can be an immense undertaking, especially if its small size makes it particularly vulnerable to phonetic accidents.

Consider for example French *avant*, from Latin *abante*. This early satellite of *ante* gradually became indispensable as *inde* moved ever close to *ante*. The latter had no hope of survival in French for, even if it could have settled its apparently irreconcilable differences with *inde*, the product of this strange alliance would later have been absorbed by the descendants of *in* and *intus*, whose semantic load was already crushing. Even the twofold nature (negative and local) of the Latin prefix *in-* must have been ambiguous at times, though the medieval mother must have found it very convenient that as *in-cincta* (hence *enceinte*) she could remain 'en-girdled' or 'un-girdled' as she chose.

The therapeutic process which produced *abante* should also be examined. What made *ab* especially suitable here? Such words as *abhinc*, whose original redundance soon wore off just as in the corresponding *from hence*, shed some light on the problem. **Abhoc*, the supposed ancestor of *avec*, must have been born in like circumstances. A similar process has given us *davant* (from *de avant*), then later *devant* on the analogy of *desoz* (dessous), *desor* (dessus), etc. It is important to determine the successive steps of these agglutinations, and thus avoid creating such Latin monsters as **de-de-ab-ante* to account for *dedevant*.

Ariere, generally traced back to a reconstructed **ad retro* whose credibility depends largely on its relation to *abante*, is more likely to have been built on the analogy of *avant*, thus completing the system with *riere* and *deriere*. What is curious is that *deriere*, which in Old French belonged with its counterpart *devant* to the well-integrated family of *dedenz* (dedans), *deors* (dehors), etc., should have broken away and become *derrière*, with its first vowel opened. This is usually attributed to the influence of *derrain* 'last'. However, this would hardly have been sufficient in itself. A far more potent cause was, I think, the opening influence of the *r* on the preceding vowel—a phenomenon which has played a considerable part in the

history of vowels, especially in Latin, French, and English. Nothing less could have torn *deriere* away from *devant*.

This is but a small sample of the phonetic problems to be considered. It is obvious that form cannot be properly studied without reference to meaning, and the reverse is even truer. So let us now glance at the semantic contents of these words, and incidentally we shall try to discover how the present system, with *avant* for time and *devant* for place, gradually developed.

Avant and *après* are both found in Old French, but there was little affinity between them. *Après* generally referred to time, but its use was very restricted, as we shall see. On the other hand *avant*, closely linked with *arriere*, and similarly *devant* with *deriere*, were essentially local, though with very occasional extension to time, mostly of the type *dorenavant*. But there was a striking difference between the two pairs: while *devant-deriere* was static, much as we find it now, *avant-arriere* possessed a remarkable dynamism, which has left a few traces in modern French. An examination of this striking aspect of *avant* in Old French would require comparison with parallel dynamic pairs such as *sus-jus* 'up-down', so surprisingly similar in behaviour to the corresponding Germanic particles and so unlike anything in the modern language.

The Old French 'before-after' structure hinged on *ainz* and *puis*, from **antius* and **postius*, comparatives derived from *ante* and *post*. *Ainz*, with the related *anceis*, functioned as adverb or preposition, *ainz que* as conjunction; similarly *puis*, with its satellite *après*, could also be adverb or preposition, and *puis que* was the corresponding conjunction. But this system early developed the germs that led to its dissolution. Any word meaning 'after' is prone to acquire a causal meaning (examples will readily occur to the reader) and *puis que* was soon affected. *Post hoc ergo propter hoc* is not only a psychological, but a profound linguistic truth. And at the other end *ainz* behaved in the opposite way and became an adversative, almost equivalent to 'but'—a development easily understood from structural considerations: as *puis que* confirmed, its opposite *ainz* contradicted. The semantic history of *plutôt*, *rather*, *cher* is an obvious parallel. Further light is thrown on these relations by the semantic contents of Latin *cum* 'when', with its latent 'since' and 'although'.

Now the collapse of *puis que* brought the marginal *après* to the central position. And if *avant* rather than *devant* became its counterpart, it was no doubt to some extent because its dynamism predisposed it towards time, but I think the main reason was the purely external one that *avant* was in form so much closer to *après*. This

type of structural determinism will probably be found to account for quite a number of semantic developments.

This corresponds, in the field of meaning, to a series of well-known phonetic phenomena, such as the transformation of *gravis* to **grevis* on the analogy of its opposite *levis*, and that of *reddere* to *rendere* after *pre(he)ndere*. So can *ouvrir* be traced back to *aperire* through such polar reshaping based on *cooperire*. A little thought will also reveal that the *female* owes her form to the attraction of the *male*.

We find an interesting confirmation of this formal *avant-après* relation in the history of *depuis*, an analogical derivative of *puis*. As *puis que* developed its causal sense, most of its temporal contents passed on to *après*, but *depuis* also benefited. This use of *depuis* as equivalent of 'after' brought on a corresponding development of *devant*, its formal partner, in a temporal sense. However, *depuis* gradually acquired its present meaning, presumably from the latent opposition *de . . . à* 'from . . . till'. As a result it finally gave up its 'after' sense to *après*, and *devant*, thus losing its main support, soon surrendered its temporal functions to *avant*, which was left in full control of the field.

In modern French we still discern some traces of the former dynamism of *avant-arrière* in its particular application to moving objects, in contrast with static *devant-derrière*—hence its frequency in nautical language as equivalent to 'fore and aft'. Furthermore it is recognizable not only in *en avant—en arrière*, but also in such expressions as *pénétrer plus avant*, *s'enfoncer très avant*, *si avant*, etc. where *avant* is always accompanied by an intensive.

As for temporal *devant*, its use in the modern language is mostly confined to comparative expressions and especially *comme devant*. The marked affection of some writers for this phrase is to be explained, I think, by the great popularity of La Fontaine's fable *La laitière et le pot au lait*, which all children learn by heart, and the fact that they are the final words:

Je suis Gros Jean comme devant.

makes them particularly memorable. There is a case for the study of the linguistic and literary fortunes of this variety of famous last words.

An important factor interfering with the integrity of the system is the shape of the human body, which induces certain semantic developments of *derrière*. The force of linguistic analogy is well illustrated by the fact that, despite the far slighter anatomical justification for it, there soon came into being a corresponding use of *devant* as a noun, mostly limited to children's language, and whose

associations may best be suggested by creating a structural infant *befront*, probably doomed to be stillborn. On the other hand the taboos involved brought about a restriction in the use of *derrière* as a noun, from which *arrière* (and indirectly *avant*) and *fond* gained substantially. But by an odd twist of fate *derrière* unexpectedly recouped some of its losses in England, of all places, where the far stronger taboo operating against the corresponding term led to a never-ending search for proper euphemisms, which promptly became improper. The French word was borrowed for this purpose, but I doubt that any example of the converse could be found. Incidentally the disappearance of *after* in German seems also to be connected with the anatomical development of the noun, and the striking deterioration of the prefixes *after-* and *aber-* must be a related phenomenon.

In a brief sketch like this we can only pick out a few of the more striking aspects of the history of *avant*. In a detailed study other related words would have to be closely examined, and among these one of the most promising is certainly *auparavant*. The survival of this word is probably due to the grammarians' insistence on a distinction between prepositions and adverbs, just as *par après* was favoured on the same grounds. Our languages have suffered much from this artificial classification into parts of speech. It would be equally justifiable to consider that the verbs in *il mange* and *il mange tout* belong to two different parts of speech. Fortunately we find a more natural attitude in familiar spoken French which does not hesitate to use *avant* and *après*, and even *avec*, in adverbial function. These words have enough 'body' for the purpose, whereas the small size of *sur*, *sous*, *dans*, etc. must have been largely responsible for the retention of *dessus*, *dessous*, *dedans*, etc.

Furthermore, looking back to the origin of *auparavant*, we should consider how and why this further enlargement did develop out of the *par* family. These *par* words were numerous in Old French: *par avant* and *par devant* (living still, but only in such phrases as *par-devant notaire*), *par delez* and *par dejoste*, both equivalent to 'near', etc. Incidentally these last two may represent desperate attempts of *lez* and *joste* to survive: from *dejoste lui* (Roland 831) to *près de lui* a long evolution may be traced. This is not as irrelevant as may appear for if, instead of *avant*, we had taken *après* as our starting-point, we would have to deal with the relation between *près* and *après*, and more specifically the semantic change from 'near' to 'after', which at once opens up exciting prospects.

However, this would lead to a long digression into the concepts 'near' and 'far' and their affinity with time. I will merely point out

that the semantic development of English *close* throws much light on the passage from *pressum* to *près*, and moreover that we find in the relation between *proche* and *prochain*, *near* and *next*, and more clearly still in German *nah* and *nach*, living parallels to the *près-après* association. A glance at *nah* and *near* will also reveal that the latter was originally a true comparative in sense as well as in form, thus corresponding to *näher*. And going further back we find that *ere* (cf. *eher*) and *after* also developed in the same way and soon shed their earlier comparative sense, an interesting corroboration of the semantic passage from comparative **antius-postius* to positive *ainz-puis*. The psychological basis for these, and related, phenomena deserves a special study.

Considering now this temporal field as a whole, we are at once struck by the greater number and frequency of 'after' words. Thus *puis*, *alors*, *ensuite* face cumbrous *auparavant*. Owing to space and subject limitations we cannot examine here how *puis* lost its freedom, or dwell on the absorbing history of *alors* out of *lors*, just as *adonc* developed out of *donc*, on the analogy of earlier *atant*, or consider the gradual coalescence of *ensuite* (*en suite de quoi* is still very much alive), nor can we explore the rich semantic contents of such words. To these terms and many others, like *aussitôt*, *dès*, *à peine*, etc. of the 'after' family, there are few 'before' correlatives.

Quand itself, which geometrical assumptions would probably place half-way between 'before' and 'after', comes actually much closer to the latter and is often equivalent to it. Hence, like *puis que*, it readily develops into a causal 'since' in Old French, and this too is the usual sense of Latin *cum*. The actual centre between 'before' and 'after' is really occupied by 'while', and it is not surprising to find that words of this type often acquire an additional adversative sense which, as in *cependant*, may even oust the original. It will also be observed that, in so far as their semantic area extends to this centre, *quand* and *cum* may occasionally be virtual adversatives.

Now this great development and frequency of 'after' words, contrasted with the comparative paucity of 'before' equivalents, is not surprising. It follows from the flux of time itself, which determines the successive steps of all experiences and therefore narratives. Even the novelist who confronts us with the final scene at the outset will soon go back to some point in the past from which he can come down along with time. Nor is this *coming down* an artificial image; it is as natural as gravity. Everywhere we find linguistic reflections of this view of time: thus the French *remontent jusqu'à la plus haute antiquité*. Many parallels will occur to the reader. And it must not be imagined that this is a European idea. The Chinese

have actually developed it far more than we have, for example in such everyday expressions as *shang hui* 'last time' and *hsia hui* 'next time', literally 'up turn' and 'down turn', and similarly *shang yüeh* 'last month' and *hsia yüeh* 'next month', lit. 'up moon' and 'down moon', etc.

One may well feel tempted to pause here for a closer examination of these picturesque expressions for 'past' and 'future' and to ascertain how they are related to the widespread synonymous terms of the 'go-come' type, but this would require a special essay. Within these narrow limits we cannot even consider *before*, whose relation to *for* would at once lead to the interesting differentiation of German *für-vor* and to Latin *pro*, whose semantic association with *per* must have played a part in the development of French *pour*. It will be more relevant to confine ourselves to certain aspects of *avant*, and to consider now briefly some of its peculiar fortunes in English.

In the form *van* it is an abbreviation of *vanguard*, from French *avant-garde*. In Roland LVIII *reregarde* is opposed to *ansgarde*, whose prefix must be the pretonic form of *ainz*. By the twelfth century absorption in the *en-* prefix was only averted by the creation of a rejuvenated *avant-garde*, and *arriere-garde* soon followed. These words gradually made their way into a number of European languages, including Russian. The loss of the initial vowel in Spanish and Italian *vanguardia* must be due to confusion with the feminine article, as so often happens. English *vanguard*, which appears in the late fifteenth century, probably owes its form to *rearguard*, and the abridged *van*, which OED records from 1633, was clearly prompted by the independent *rear*.

However, the shorter the word the more it is exposed to homonymy, and our truncated *van* was soon to find its match. Another *van* appeared in the early nineteenth century, this one a shortened *caravan*. There is no need to describe this ubiquitous van, now the most common vehicle for the transport of goods. As such it has become the usual name of that particular baggage-waggon normally found at the tail-end of trains. Thus, in so far as the van is part of a moving mass, this new *van* full of vitality is at the *end*, whereas the older *van*, now moribund in the spoken language, was at the *front*. And to add to the confusion there is a guard in the train-van, the *van(s) guard* who looks after this *guard's van*. As a result of this striking homonymic conflict, we find that all *vans*, whether they be in the van of armies or of progress or anywhere else, are increasingly assumed to be at the tail.

What is perhaps most remarkable is that such a striking semantic development should have come to pass almost unobserved. One may sometimes feel that a certain use of *van* in a poem is rather

strange, but then one comes across such quaint things in literature! No doubt, Education would restore all those retracted vans to their former precedence, but the well-known force of false regression (more aptly termed false progression in this case) would almost inevitably thrust forward many vans whose proper habitat is at the end, and the resulting confusion would be worse confounded.

It is of some interest to observe that *avaunt*, another early borrowing which retained much of the dynamism of its ancestor *avant*, gradually developed a sense which corresponds to French *arrière*. This is not surprising as *avant* was potentially capable of expressing motion towards or away from the speaker, the direction being usually determined by an accompanying verb. Moreover it is only when comparing English and French that we become aware of this, and *avaunt* has long been dead. The case of *van* is far more arresting, as the causes and results of the conflict are all here for us to observe.

Those who have learned should beware of letting their acquired knowledge lord it too much over their feeling. Besides the traditional dictionaries which tell us what words meant *once*—and which we mistakenly expect to tell us what they mean *now*—our greatest treasure would be a book revealing what words are *felt to mean and to suggest*. Only with such a work could we really look forward instead of backward. Of course there would be many 'misinterpretations'. But these, with high frequencies, should take precedence over 'correct interpretations' with lower frequencies. The indulgence which accepts the *d* in *poids* and *advance* should extend to meaning, nor should it be confined to the 'mistakes' of scholarship.

The sharp distinction between *feeling* and *knowledge* may be illustrated with *naguère*. To what I believe is an increasing number of people including myself this means 'a long time ago', although the only sense given in dictionaries is 'récemment', 'il y a peu de temps'. Larousse adds in brackets: 's'oppose à *jadis*, il y a longtemps', probably a pointed remark. As a child I naturally accepted the word as an indivisible unit, synonymous with *jadis*, but though for many years I have been well aware of its obvious structure *n'a guère* (i.e. 'il n'y a pas longtemps') this has hardly affected my feelings about this term, which I never meet in its official meaning without a sense of wonder.

We should obviously beware of analysis as a key to present meaning. If *naguère's* sense is to be extracted from its composition, why not apply the same process to *bientôt*, *cependant*, *pourtant*, and countless others? Of course this may give some insight into semantic history, just as the present spelling reveals something of the pronunciation of the twelfth century—but the French have long

ceased to pronounce *voix* like English *voice*. It is illuminating to observe that even the most inveterate analyst will use *sans doute* only when there is doubt, and *sans cesse* only when there is 'cease'.

Another word frequently felt to mean the opposite of its recorded sense is *ragoûtant*. Indeed *un plat peu ragoûtant* seems less repelling than *un plat ragoûtant*. The obvious cause is the tremendous affective force of *dégoûtant*, which has practically wiped out *dégoutant* as well. *Disgusting* too would make the going hard for any other *-gusting*.

In addition to their official form and content, words are also the sum of their phonetic and semantic associations. If we see *lepidus* in *lépidoptère*, and *entomos* (the prototype of *insect*) in *entamer*, we should not lightly discard our beliefs. We are in good company with Rabelais, who chose to write *entommer*, and we may well be nearer the original truth than would appear. Sartre's *chaleur de cloporte*, significantly in *Huis Clos*, makes us wonder to what extent *cloporte* suggests *porte close*, besides innumerable varieties of pigs. One need not be an oniscologist to see that there is a physical justification here, in the behaviour of these creatures, which led Americans to call them *pill bugs*. Natural promptings too must have thrust the cat in the *chat-huant*—the Chinese owl *mao t'ou ying* (lit. cat-head ying) confirms this—and urged the labials to turn *femier* into *fumier*: *le fumier fume*.

On the other hand the cause of *van's* regression is man-made and thus limited in time and space. But within these limitations it illustrates admirably the inexhaustible capacity of the imagination in building semantic bridges to interpret the less known in terms of the better known, however wide the gap. This is perhaps the most interesting aspect of this curious offspring of *avant*.

A COMMENT ON PETRONIUS

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THE post-Renaissance world has had little difficulty in coming to terms with the great Roman writers, with Livy and Cicero, Vergil and Horace. These men were honoured in their own generation, they were revered in the next, studied and quoted and made the instrument of the Empire's education. The fathers of the Church tried to keep their pagan seductiveness at arm's length but without success, and they were passed on to the Middle Ages, almost in their entirety, as text-books and models that incorporated the best precept and practice of a past that was never regarded as altogether past. With the coming of the Renaissance, the reverence grew to an adulation and they became virtually the scriptures of the new world. And because they were, even more than they had been in their own day, the models for civilised thinking and writing, they were rarely called to defend themselves against a contemporary standard. They were themselves the standard, the point of reference, and though one classical writer might be measured against another, though they had their own hierarchy and order of merit, there was always someone in the ancient canon who had given an answer that could be treated as revelation. The attitude has continued almost up to the present day. Our world has been on easy and familiar terms with these classical writers because to a large extent they created that world.

One reason why they have been accepted with so little question in our day is that they were so accepted in their own. The 'rightness' of these men was an axiom in ancient times, and the Renaissance tended to accept the critical pronouncements of antiquity as uncritically as it had the works themselves. But there were a few authors among the ancients who did not follow the main stream of literature, who fell outside the categories, and these the ancients themselves never really succeeded in 'placing'. Catullus is one of them, a lonely figure out of step with the movements around him, not quite respectable. Another is Petronius, the *arbiter elegantiae* of Nero's court, who departed so far from the practice of his times as to write a novel.

The ancient world and a good deal of the modern world have not known what to do with that novel. It obviously did not fit the measure of any of the literary kinds and that was reason enough for doubting if it was literature at all, if it should be taken seriously,

as a work of art. The result has been its chequered career down the ages, and the fact that a large part of it survives by a happy accident.

Tacitus in his *Annals* tells the story of Petronius's suicide and he is obviously deeply moved in the telling; but he makes no mention of the *Satyricon*. It is possible that Tacitus had read it; there are echoes of phrases and ideas in the *Dialogus*. And Martial and Juvenal too seem to be remembering Petronius more than once. Yet there is no mention of his name by his near-contemporaries (with the exception of Tacitus) until Terentianus Maurus, who probably wrote some 150 years after his death, quotes him very briefly on three separate occasions to illustrate his metrical experiments. And after that there is a word here and a line there, in the grammarians and antiquarians, a 5-line lyric of Sidonius Apollinaris where we find Petronius, surprisingly, in the company of Cicero, Livy and Vergil, and a small number of glossary items. The text itself, probably in an epitomised form, survived the Dark Ages, and we know that it was read in the 12th century by John of Salisbury and Alexander Neckam and in the 13th by Vincent of Beauvais, but by Renaissance times only fragmentary collections of excerpts were extant. As a result Petronius was by-passed by the classical revival and made only small impact on the Renaissance world. It was not until 1650 that a MS was discovered in Trau in Jugo-Slavia that gave the complete text of the *Cena Trimalchionis*, and Europe was able to see the narrative gift of Petronius operating, as it were, at full spread. The French, the countrymen of Rabelais, took to him most readily, and the publication of the *Cena* was followed by several French editions, translations and imitations. He was welcomed by the Italians too; the English, possibly through lack of sympathy with the obscenity that disfigures certain parts of his work, were least ready to appreciate him, though in the 18th century Dryden and Pope, following in the steps of the French, were prepared to accord him high rank as a literary critic. In the 19th century he was studied intensively by historians and philologists. His picture of the Neronian age was taken up, in the dearth of other contemporary evidence, as a quarry of social and antiquarian information by historians who sometimes ignored the fact that he was writing of specific people in specific places in a work artistically slanted away from the normal. The philologists found in him their richest reservoir of the non-literary *sermo plebeius*. More recently French and German scholars, and in the last 30 years Italian scholars, have turned to real criticism of the *Satyricon* as a piece of literature. The English prejudice seems to remain. Since the publication of Beck's *Age of Petronius Arbiter*

in 1856, no discussion of Petronius of more than article length had appeared in English till Bagnani's *Petronius, Arbiter of Elegance* appeared in 1956. And both these works, like the only complete edition in English, that of E. T. Sage, were the work of North American scholars.

There is good reason for the revived interest in Petronius over the last 60 years. If the things Petronius was trying to do were judged unacceptable at the serious level by the ancients, perhaps it is because their standards of acceptability were too narrow. Perhaps we are in a better position to judge than were the literary academies of his day. Indeed in many respects he seems to belong more to our age than he does to his own. The novel has found a secure place in our literary scheme of things, and we have a special interest in looking back at the first of its kind.

We can be fairly certain that it was the first. Desperate efforts have been made to squeeze Petronius into some literary tradition, to make him one of a line of writers working towards a final form. Because he was telling a developed story in prose, the Greek Romance was first suggested as the progenitor of the *Satyricon*. But Petronius's novel antedates all the surviving romances with the exception of a few fragments such as the Ninus romance, discovered in Egypt late in the 19th century, and the small sketches of Parthenius. From these fragments an antecedent Romance tradition was conjectured; but it was still patently impossible to admit Petronius to the school. The later romances—and the earlier ones reconstructed from the scraps—were highly idealised love-stories set in a rosily-imagined past, rhetorical and humourless in theme and expression, pervaded by a high moral seriousness. Petronius did not belong in that company. Then it was suggested, so that at least he might be fitted into the tradition in reverse, that the *Satyricon* was a parody of Greek romance. But again it was obvious that Petronius could not have respected Greek romance enough to pay it the homage of the close attention and slightly off-key imitation that parody involves. It was suggested then that Petronius's work be put in the category of 'realistic romance'. This was very nearly a contradiction in terms, but at least it was an admission that Petronius's novel was something different in kind, and he was back again in his school of one. As far as the evidence went, this man had made the decision to write what we call a novel.

When we turn to Petronius's literary criticism, we find no discussion of a 'theory of the novel', but we do find some very surprising things. The extant portion of the *Satyricon* opens with a debate on the damage done to young minds by the training of the rhetorical schools. Petronius can claim no originality here. There

is abundant criticism of the schools from the pens of the men who were most deeply involved in them, who trained others and were themselves trained in them, from Cicero to Quintilian and beyond. It is in the second of Petronius's excursions into criticism, in the short passage that prefaces the *Bellum Civile*, that we meet some of the most incisive criticism that came out of the ancient world. Even if the *Bellum Civile* is plainly an attempt at pastiche, even though the passage itself is 'thrown away' on Eumolpus, the crazy poet, it is impossible not to regard it as Petronius's own serious comment. The passage is worth quoting in full:

Multos iuvenes carmen decepit. Nam ut quisque uersum pedibus instruxit sensumque teneriorem uerborum ambitu intexuit, putauit se in Heliconem uenisse. Sic forensibus ministeriis exercitati frequenter ad carminis tranquillitatem tanquam ad portum feliciorem refugerunt, credentes facilius poema extrui posse, quam controuersiam sententiolis uibrantibus pictam. Ceterum neque generosior spiritus uanitatem amat, neque concipere aut edere partum mens potest nisi ingenti flumine litterarum inundata. Refugiendum est ab omni uerborum, ut ita dicam, uilitate et sumendae uoces a plebe summotae, ut fiat 'odi profanum vulgus et arceo'. Praeterea curandum est, ne sententiae emineant extra corpus orationis expressae, sed intexto uestibus colore niteant. Homerus testis et lyrici. Romanusque Vergilius et Horatii curiosa felicitas. Ceteri enim aut non uiderunt uiam qua iretur ad carmen, aut uisan¹ timuerunt calcare. Ecce belli ciuilis ingens opus quisquis attigerit nisi plenus litteris, sub onere labetur. Non enim res gestae uersibus comprehendendae sunt, quod longe melius historici faciunt, sed per ambages deorumque ministeria et fabulosum sententiarum tormentum praecipitandus est liber spiritus, ut potius furentis animi uaticinatio appareat quam religiosae orationis sub testibus fides.*

If we had no more of Petronius's criticism than the word *Romanus* applied to Vergil, and the words *curiosa felicitas* applied to Horace, we would know that we were dealing with a man of superior critical insight. Those words are virtually 'asides', yet they have come to be accepted as definitive statements on the two poets. But this short passage is remarkable for other things. In it Petronius

*Many young men have been duped by poetry. For as soon as any one of them has equipped his verse with metre and has combined trifling matter with extravagant word-play, he imagines that he has completed the journey to Helicon. In much the same way those who are busy with court-practice often escape to the restfulness of verse-making, like a ship finding a happier

has concentrated a series of remarks that sum up much of the best of ancient criticism. He makes Horace's point on the danger of the 'purple patch', and Cicero's on the writer's need to steep himself in literature. His remarks on the poet's 'possession' remind us of Plato, and those on the distinction between poetry and history bring Aristotle to mind. He is plainly no iconoclast; yet his manner is curiously different from that of other ancient critics. There is no mention of tropes and figures and metres, no discoursing on the function and purpose of poetry. He skirts dogma and abstraction, and goes straight to the poetic process itself.

When he talks of the man who 'has combined trifling matter with extravagant word-play', he has nailed the insipidity of most Silver Latin verse. He has seen that mechanical verse-making in demanding metres is often mistaken for genuine poetry, and that this has made for the 'restfulness of verse-making' in comparison with the prose-making of his day. His advice to epic poets that they should display 'the vision of a mind possessed rather than scrupulously truthful utterance under oath' was to become the standard quotation for 17th and 18th century critics of epic. Where he speaks of the mind striving to 'conceive or give birth to its offspring', he is introducing the word *partus* (as E. R. Curtius points out in his *European Literature and the Latin Middle Ages*) 'into the vocabulary of Latin and the romance languages as a designation for literary work'. Coleridge in the *Biographia Literaria* makes the remark: '*Praecipitandus est liber spiritus*, says Petronius most happily . . . it is not easy to conceive more meaning condensed in fewer words.' Petronius does seem in these passages to be struggling to express

haven; they believe that a poem is easier to shape than a declamation embellished with flashing epigrams. But the genuinely gifted person has no time for this shallowness; the mind cannot conceive or give birth to its offspring unless it has been deluged and flooded with literature. The poet must avoid any 'cheapness' of expression. He must use a language that is distinct from popular usage, putting into practice (Horace's) 'I loathe and fend from me the common herd'. In addition he must be careful that certain ideas do not stand out prominently from the main body of his utterance; high colour must be woven into the very cloth. Witness Homer and the lyricists and Roman Vergil and Horace's combination of genius and sheer hard work. The others either did not see the path that led to poetry or saw it and were afraid to tread it. For instance, anyone who embarks on a huge work like *The Civil War*, unless he be soaked in literature, will collapse under the strain. It is not a matter of conveying the facts in verse—historians can do that much better—but the poet's gift, without inhibition, must be flung into obliquities of expression, divine interventions and the evocative distortion of ideas, so that there emerges the vision of a mind possessed rather than scrupulously truthful utterance under oath.

the thing we call 'imagination', a concept for which Latin had no accurate term.

Perhaps it is this that lifts Petronius out of his time—his concentration on the poetic processes and his own subjectivity as a critic. Longinus has usually been called the first 'modern' critic, partly because he proceeds by analysis and comparison, partly because we can see him judging not by rule or convention but by his pulse beat. We can see that in Petronius too. He is, as Paratore puts it, the critic with enthusiasm and the sure touch.

The poems of Petronius that have come down to us independently of the *Satyricon* are difficult to talk about because the genuineness of many of them is open to doubt. Three fragments and two poems are certainly genuine, a few are almost certainly not, while the majority, some twenty poems, depend on the 16th century ascription of Scaliger and Binet, who gave them to Petronius on the grounds of resemblance to the Petronian style. Perhaps the fact that Petronius was the man chosen to father these poems is evidence in itself of a special quality attaching to his known work. These Petronian poems have a tendency to be put in strange company. They are not often treated seriously in the compendiums of Latin literature. But Helen Waddell in her *Medieval Latin Lyrics* uses no fewer than eight of them when the next most popular poet is given only three. She justifies herself by the remark that Petronius is 'closer to the first Italian sonnet-writer than he is to Horace'. F. J. E. Raby in his *Secular Latin Poetry* claims that they contain a 'pure poetic feeling such as was hardly to be known again until the rebirth of "pure poetry" in the middle ages'. P. S. Allen in his *Medieval Latin Lyrics* speaks of 'racial European verse from Petronius to the Cambridge Songs' and 'medieval literature from Petronius on'.

Here again we have the strange un-Roman quality, the reaching out towards modern times. None of the poems could be called a great poem. They are surprising very largely for what they lack, and that includes most of the qualities that made for greatness in Roman verse. They have nothing of the density and obliquity of statement of Horace, the aural sensitivity of Vergil, the wit and brilliance of Martial and Lucan, the rhetorical thunder of Juvenal. They avoid mythological embellishment, and indeed intellectual complexity of any sort. They make no display of metrical control; Petronius uses his metres easily, without making too great demands on them, sure that they will convey comfortably all that he wants to give us.

What he wants to give us is simply the uncomplicated account of a mood or an idea. And he gives it with the lucidity of reportage

that he displayed in his novel, with the careful word-weighting penetration that he used in his literary criticism. This was rarely done or even attempted in Roman poetry. And again the tone is different. The note of brooding and sullenness which characterises so much of Latin poetry, the disenchantment that became a kind of convention with it is replaced in Petronius by a ready acceptance of the world, a curiosity about it and delight in it. This is probably the reason why he can so easily take his place in the company of the *Carmina Burana* and the Cambridge Songs. He is uninhibited in self-examination, wholly sensitive in taking impressions of the world around him through eye or ear. He is positive.

The result is an immediacy of lyric expression that we associate with Sappho and Catullus. Yet Sappho and Catullus, for all their sudden freshness, are still tied to their times. Petronius's poetry hardly seems to belong to any age or any place.

In all these areas then, in his literary criticism, in his poetry, Petronius seems to have revolted from the attitudes of his day and to have created something utterly new. It appears on the face of it to be a most remarkable achievement. Yet when we look at the over-all literary picture at Rome, it is possible to see how the situation cried out for Petronius or another like him. Perhaps Petronius was not so lonely a figure as he appears. Perhaps there were others, writing as he wrote, whom time and chance and the choice of the ancients have not allowed to come down to us. The casualty rate for this kind of work was high. It was high because of a continuing blind-spot in the Roman view of literature.

The first recorded work of Latin literature was a translation of the *Odyssey*, and throughout its long history Latin literature continued to be, to a greater or less extent, dependent on the Greeks. The native rhythms of Latin verse were discarded very early, and the sombre Latin tongue had to be squeezed into one after another of the metres the Greeks had devised for their own sparkling language. The Romans never gave themselves a chance to see their own literary genres develop; the Greek forms were taken over one by one, epic, tragedy, comedy, lyric, pastoral and the rest. Greek mythology was borrowed in bulk. Lacking self-confidence for creation, the Romans lacked it for criticism too. For their theory they took over the Greek literary standards which included the utilitarian attitude to literature that goes back to the sophists, the view that words can be infinitely manipulated to serve their proper function of persuasion.

It was inevitable that on these terms Roman literature should be divorced, to some extent, from the experience of the people who produced and read it. It put a premium on the industry that could

achieve some control over clumsy tools, and on the intellectual power that could infuse some vitality into a literary product that was expected to be at two removes from life itself.

The great Latin writers are all the more great for the handicaps under which they worked. The achievements of Ennius, Lucretius and the great Augustans in verse, and of Cicero and Livy in prose were of course enormous. Yet we can never completely lose the feeling that the great creative artists are clogged, that they are working on artificial terms with intractable material, that they are fighting to speak. They cannot be blamed if their accomplishment is sometimes measured simply by the degree of their success in the struggle. What Vergil did with the hexameter was a miracle, but the hexameter had then achieved its fulfilment. The battle did not have to be fought again, and no one was ever to use it so well. The same thing happened with Horace and the Greek lyric metres. Once they were tamed, their purpose was exhausted.

Prose in Rome was in a happier position than verse. Prose was the senior partner, possibly because the Roman temper was fundamentally prosaic. Prose composition, spoken or written, was the basis of Roman education. The greater part of Roman criticism is concerned with the refining of prose style. The text-books on oratory are thorough expositions of a severely technical approach to arrangement of matter, choice of words, rhythm, use of figures; and the continual practice of the *praelectiones* and *controversiae* made Romans from an early age self-conscious and studied in their approach to the shaping of words. Prose was the form of word-organisation that remained most malleable and flexible. There was always something more to be done with it, and Tacitus showed, 150 years after Cicero, that there was still room for the creating of yet another great style. Most important of all, prose had to justify itself in professional practice and in simple communication, and to that extent at least was tied to actuality.

There was no need for verse to emerge from its foreign trappings at all. Its metre, form, mythology, and often its content were given: they could be taught and learned. Poetry was the accomplishment in which every educated Roman was expected to achieve some proficiency, and a mechanical obedience to the rules of the game produced something that looked and sounded like the real thing. The gifted poets could reach beyond this mechanical obedience, but the technical demands of verse-making were severe enough to allow the efforts of the mediocre practitioners to be mistaken for genuine poetry. When Petronius in that short passage of literary comment speaks of the man who turns away from the 'declamation embellished with flashing epigrams' to the comparative relaxation

of verse-writing, he is stating the position of poetry in relation to prose in his day.

Poetry then suffered more than prose, and the first signs of a real revolt from the Roman attitude to literature came with a poet, Catullus. Latin lyric had developed late, and took its inspiration, not from the sanctified panel of Classical Greek writers, but from the more nearly contemporary Alexandrian Greeks who had discovered in the fret and insecurity of urban life the need for self-examination and lyric self-expression. The deeply-felt lyrics of Catullus and his school earned them the scorn of Cicero, while Horace passes them over with a perfunctory mention. From the Roman point of view almost everything was wrong with Catullus, as Catullus himself knew. He is sensitive to the charge of frivolousness and lack of decorum. He makes self-conscious disclaimers for poems that today are considered among the greatest in the language. Catullus realised that in his purely lyric strain he was not fulfilling the requirements. He was parading emotion to the point of loss of dignity, he was not conveying information or bearing in mind the moral betterment of his readers, he was using the 'prosaic' metres, iambics and hendecasyllables. The revolt was short-lived. The elegiac school that succeeded him—Propertius, Tibullus, Ovid—tied itself down to the couplet, found less and less to say more and more conventionally, and reached its climax in Ovid's spiritual barrenness and frightening virtuosity. Vergil and Horace did wonderful things, but the area in which they worked had suffered a further narrowing from the demands of state patronage.

In prose, the revolt against the classical tradition had happier results. The one literary form which Quintilian could claim that Rome had created for herself was *satura*, the mixed dish of essays in prose or verse which in the hands of Lucilius and Varro had established itself as a popular form of letters. *Satura* was not tied to Greek models and was not called upon to constrict itself to the shape or manner of a hallowed ideal. It had variety of subject-matter and metre, it gave scope for invention in story-telling and for the intimate details of autobiography, its tone ranged through the intellectual seriousness of literary criticism and the moral seriousness of social satire to the easy entertainment of the literary mime. Here for the first time in Roman literature was an accepted literary form that was not over-formalised, that spoke plainly of plain things, that could entertain a wide unacademic audience with the concerns of their everyday living. Yet in the end *satura* too was cramped and formalised: our English word 'satire' is the evidence of what happened to it. It passed through Horace and Persius to Juvenal, the variety of its form reduced to the hexameter, the

variety of its content narrowed to social criticism, and its intimate tone modulated to a sullen growl.

Fortunately *satira* managed to survive in something like its original form. Juvenal represents the main line, but there is a branch-line that leads through Seneca and Petronius to the novel. All the qualities of the original *satira* except one are present in Petronius. He has the scatter of subjects, the range of prose styles, the variety of metres, the social and literary criticism, the incorporated fable and yarn. The one thing lacking is the element of autobiography. In the process of becoming a novel, *satira* had to forgo its intimate confessions and allow its author to stay outside the story.

Within the literary field proper, the Catullan school of poets and *satira* represent the full extent of the revolt from the classical tradition. But realism was to be found elsewhere in a form that was to a large extent sub-literary—in the mime, the short popular farce of the Roman stage. The mime has come down to us with a very bad reputation, for which its indecency was only partly responsible. The fact that its players were unmasked, that the female parts were played by women, that it aimed simply to amuse and entertain, gave ample reason for regarding it as a debased form of theatre. Yet the mime was the most direct imitation of life attempted by the ancients. It dealt with unidealised human beings in the recurring situations of every day, looking like human beings, sounding like human beings. If the plots were tenuous and scrappy, the greater was the attention paid to the subtleties of character-drawing. The mime, discredited and despised as it was, had a longer history of popular success than any other type of acted play in Rome, and in Petronius's day when the classical tragedies were being written more and more for the salons and less and less for the stages, this popularity was at its peak.

Petronius, seeking a model of realistic story-telling, turned inevitably to the mime. His novel, apart from a few more serious interludes, can be viewed as a series of mime-situations, a succession of 'entertainments'. The longest of the episodes is the *Cena* itself, and that is divided into a series of scene-divisions, each with its own list of players who are sharply visualised and often actually positioned and costumed. The dishes, the entertainments, even the monologues of the guests at the table are developed theatrically with surprise twists and dramatic climaxes. And as in the mime, the language is the language of the street, women play their roles as freely as men, the character types keep recurring.

The mime had established the fact that the vagaries of human conduct and character are of interest for themselves, but it is only at Trimalchio's dinner-table that we find them in extant Roman

literature. Petronius seems to have been the first Roman to see that the reporting of a human scene, without comment or a drawn moral, could itself be a criticism of life. He has been criticised for this by those who would have preferred him to slash the decadence of the times in the approved 'satirical' manner. Petronius obviously had something quite different in mind. By refusing to take up a position, by refraining from being witty and clever at the expense of his characters, by filling page after page with the meandering unfunny gossip of insignificant people, he showed that human nature, acutely observed at any level, could be made a subject of fascination. He had been fascinated himself—the painstaking attention to detail shows how closely his eye and ear had been held—and he believed that others would share his view.

Tenney Frank, discussing Roman tragedy, has said:

It is not an accident that genuine realistic tragedy failed to find its fully accepted place upon the stage till the nineteenth century, in a word, not till thorough-going democracy, by preaching the equality of men, had persuaded us of the dignity of the mere human being, and through the prose novel taught the man on the street to concern himself with his fellows as worthy themes of art. That was a stage of democratic realism which Rome did not reach while the literary art was still creative.

Realistic tragedy was not achieved in Rome; but Petronius anticipated the nineteenth century by finding interest in the man on the street. Some of that interest had already found expression in the mime.

In Petronius's own day the separation of literature from observed life had reached an extreme point. Many things have been blamed for the falling-off in creativity after the Augustan period—the individual's loss of political responsibility, the evil effects of patronage, the moral decay at the heart of the Empire. But the falling-off could almost be explained on purely literary grounds. The gap between genuine experience and literary expression had widened to such an extent that it could not possibly be bridged. The rhetorical schools were discovering more and more subtlety for language, the public auditoriums were insisting on quick impact and impressiveness of detail. But literature had gone on refusing to find new roots for itself in the life around it. The tools for recording life had taken on a life of their own and become self-subsistent. The words were about other words.

In a setting like this, Petronius's achievement perhaps seems less astonishing. When once he had rejected Roman preconceptions

about literature, there lay before him this vast unexploited area—the real, the contemporary, the personal—that had never been accepted in Rome as proper material for the man of letters. Petronius simply made new contact with things as they are. If he sounds modern, it is because his view of literary creation is not a local but a universal one.

BEAUTY IS TRUTH

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THE valediction of Keats's Grecian Urn comes as a surprise to most readers and is left as a puzzle to those who have a conscience in such matters:

Thou shalt remain, in midst of other woe
Than ours, a friend to man, to whom thou say'st,
"Beauty is truth, truth beauty,"—that is all
Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know.

In context these lines seem indefensible, for they do not follow from the poem. Taken in isolation, they remind us of Bottom's dream—so called because it had no bottom, and 'twas past the wit of man to say what dream it was. The one thing needful for us, Keats seems to be insisting, is to know that truth and beauty are convertible terms. But are they? If they are, just what significance are we invited to see in this? Why does Keats ignore, perhaps a little pointedly, the third member of the traditional trinity? Whatever meanings ingenious commentators may supply, have the lines any real meaning of their own? I remember that T. S. Eliot somewhere gives them up as a bad job and informs the reading public that he has never been able even to imagine what Keats could have been thinking of.

In this essay, I shall try to go one better than T. S. Eliot—no more. Without exploring Keats's remains or consulting his interpreters, I shall try to imagine one thing that he could have been thinking of—something that must, I think, have formed at least a part of his meaning, and that seems to me to acquire a clearer significance when placed in a context of critical theory. For it will

be agreed that what Keats says—even when we have admitted that it seems to touch the human experience of truth and beauty rather than matters of theory—has some close bearing on aesthetics. The Ode is a work of art about a work of art; the Urn (a melody unheard, a cold pastoral) speaks for music and poetry; and the closing lines, whatever complex confession of faith they may embody, clearly amount also to a statement of aesthetic theory.

In so far as they do amount to this, we may guess that Keats is affirming a belief vital in his day and generation. Any such emphatic assertion made without apparent grounds or any attempt to explain it is open to this suspicion, for it is the truths of our time that pass current without proof. To demonstrate the moral character of literature to Dryden's contemporaries, or its intellectual character to ours, is not difficult: where the issue is forgone, the steps in the argument are not closely scrutinized. It would seem that Keats is here formulating a truth of this kind—not an accepted platitude, rather a revelation with the glow of discovery still about it and answering to his own ardent quest—but still a truth chiming with ideas potent in one form or another among his more intelligent contemporaries. It is such truths that we discover with the warmest personal conviction, and poets are children of their time like the rest of us. It would therefore not be surprising to find that what Keats affirms belongs as much to the Romantic Revival as to himself, and further, perhaps, that its sense will appear most clearly by contrast with some older doctrine which it by implication denies.

This is one reason why I found myself interested in the Abbé d'Aubignac's *La Pratique du Théâtre*, which came out in 1657 and has been edited by Pierre Martino (E. Champion, 1927). It had been undertaken in 1640, the year after the publication of the first and only volume of La Mesnardière's *Poétique*, and is thus one of the text-books by which Richelieu and the Académie proposed to bring French letters under the control of Reason. Its approach, however, is unusually practical, for d'Aubignac—an assiduous theatre-goer who gives some interesting sidelights on theatrical tastes and conditions in an important transitional period—held that the principles of Aristotle and Horace had now been sufficiently examined, and made it his own task to apply these to the actual business of the theatre. Yet his mind was too agile and speculative to let theory alone, and especially in Chapter vi ('Des spectateurs et comment le Poëte doit les considérer') he lets himself go.

What interests him is the duality of a play—on the one hand a spectacle actually seen, on the other an imagined reality represented by the players—and this duality, he holds, belongs to all the

arts of imitation. It is by a picture that he chooses to illustrate his principle. We may think of a picture in two quite different ways, either as a pleasing disposition of paint on canvas, or as an actual scene represented. The painter's task, as a painter, is to give pleasure by laying on his canvas every attractive feature that paint can give it; but his picture is also a representation of reality, and as such must submit to the nature of that which it represents. As a picture, it can succeed only by presenting pleasing images: as a representation, it must be '*vray-semblable en toutes ses circonstances*'.

These are the two conflicting purposes that must somehow be reconciled, and to this end sacrifices have to be made. Thus, the artist who is to paint the penitent Magdalen will regretfully deprive her of a schoolgirl flush and a gold crown, although these are in themselves more pleasing than tear-stained cheeks and a fillet of thorns; he will place her in a desert, not a garden; by a mossy cavern, not a palace; surrounded by wild beasts, not charming pages—though he will take care that the wild beasts are not so near as to alarm the sensitive spectator. All this he must do in obedience to the claims of Verisimilitude. But he will show his skill as a painter by introducing as many pleasing stimuli as apparent truth permits. Thus, his Magdalen will be in an agreeable posture, half-draped (for a full robe is ungraceful), kneeling rather than prone (lest her greatest beauties be hidden), at the entrance to her cave so that she may appear in the best light and be made in every way as pictorially attractive as is consistent with her unfortunate situation. In a word, it is the painter's real business to paint pleasing images, but always on one condition—that the spectators do not catch him at it. Should his real ever become his ostensible business, he had better shut up shop. The intelligent public would cease to patronize him.

And so with the playwright. As artist, he must deck his play with everything that can make it most effective, with fine passions, moving sentiments, illustrious figures of rhetoric. Yet, in deference to the reality represented, he must rigorously exclude every pleasing ingredient that would seem to be introduced for the purpose of pleasing and that is not fully warranted by colours of probability. '*Et j'ose dire que le plus grand Art du Théâtre consiste à trouver toutes ces couleurs.*'

What is funny or fallacious in an old theory commonly strikes us at once, and certainly I shall not invite modern readers to take this crotchet of d'Aubignac's quite seriously as it stands. His distinction between the actual and the representational character of a play or picture is vitiated by his confusing the pleasures of

sense with those of sentiment and reflection; and it would perhaps be tactless to ask why the conscientious painter with a full palette should choose to represent the penitent Magdalen rather than Venus rising from the foam, or whether, granting equal merit in the execution, the first picture could ever rival the second. Yet we cannot dismiss this theory as a mere eccentricity now happily defunct. Apart from its measure of undeniable sense, it illustrates well—and perhaps all the better for a certain doctrinaire sharpness—one of the most important differences between the neo-classical and the romantic views of art.

Set against d'Aubignac's, Keats's statement at once becomes meaningful. For Keats, it would seem, the truth of art imports beauty, and beauty truth; beauty is but the shining countenance of truth as poets and painters discover it. For d'Aubignac, on the other hand, the Probable (or Truth as a character of art) is a somewhat irksome condition that must be complied with before the Pleasing (which includes Beauty) can be enjoyed by intelligent people; and there can be no question of identifying the two, for the artist must strain his skill to select only Truth's most pleasing wares. In these essentials d'Aubignac is not at all eccentric. On the contrary, his individual twist simply sets in relief one of the main features of the neo-classical system.

What I mean is its tendency to think always in terms of dual control or a tension between opposites. This we may observe both in the creating mind and in the work of art that it creates. Within the creative process, Fancy (or Wit, or Imagination) co-operates at high tension with Reason or Judgment:

For wit and judgment often are at strife,

Though meant each other's aid, like man and wife.

It may be easy for the philosopher Hobbes (in his Answer to Davenant) to put the two firmly in their proper places—'Judgment begets the strength and structure, and Fancy begets the ornaments of a Poem'—and the superintendence of Judgment is commonly admitted. Yet in practice the rebel Fancy, like Milton's Satan, disturbs the balance of the state. More lovely than her "severer Sister", she claims equality with her—even superiority—and sometimes seems to treat her more as a servant than a supervisor. Perhaps, in view of the character of the seventeenth century and the long tradition of Rhetoric with its emphasis on display and emotional transport, one should not be surprised at the strength of the tendency to exalt the affective as against the cognitive function of poetry. La Mesnardiere, in Book vii of his *Poétique*, makes the point with almost cynical bluntness: 'Et à

parler absolument, vn Poëme n'est point raisonnable s'il n'enchanter & s'il n'éblouit la Raison de ses Auditeurs.'

Within the art work, a tension between the Marvellous and the Probable mirrors the strife of Fancy and Judgment. The Probable ('Vraisemblance') is not what the modern reader, bemused by later theories of realism, expects to find it. He must look, not back through Zola, but forward from Aristotle. Chapter x of the *Poetics* lays it down that peripety and discovery should be 'the consequence, necessary or probable, of the antecedents.' It seems clear that Aristotle judges probability primarily by the causal cogency with which consequences follow from their antecedents within the play; and, since we know that he was ready to approve antecedents that were in the ordinary sense improbable or even impossible, it follows that artistic probability may be very different from probability in fact. How readily the Aristotelian liberties were accepted in what Edouard Bray calls the Age of Rules is pleasantly illustrated in Corneille's third *Discours*, where he rebuts with some vigour Aristotle's (misunderstood) stricture on Euripides for spiriting away Medea in the chariot of the Sun:

Il me semble que c'en est un assez grand fondement que de l'avoir faite magique, et d'en avoir rapporté dans le poëme des actions autant au-dessus des forces de la nature que celle-là. Après ce qu'elle a fait pour Jason à Colchos, après qu'elle a rajeuni son père Eson depuis son retour, après qu'elle a attaché des feux invisibles au présent qu'elle a fait à Creuse, ce char volant n'est point hors de la vraisemblance.

This passage shows how far the doctrine of Probability may be assimilated to that of Keeping, and how slight is its necessary connexion with the standards of likelihood recognized in real life. In certain ways Probability imposes a strict restraint: it enjoins a close causal sequence, resembling the compulsion by which a conclusion follows from its premises; it forbids violation of the unities, which are based on the principle of non-contradiction; it will tolerate no needless deviation from the traits established as proper to a given age or sex or calling, for this would be to deny findings based on observation and confirmed by common consent. But its whole character is logical rather than empirical. What the artist must observe are the probabilities, not of crude nature, but of 'nature methodiz'd'; and hence the Marvellous, though responsible to Reason, may often snap her fingers at facts. For Nature is methodized to accord, not primarily with the unyielding world of fact, but rather with the dispositions of the educated mind. The test is, not 'what is in fact likely to happen', but 'what an "honneste

homme" can readily accept within the given poem'. Thus the rigour of the Age of Rules, to which d'Aubignac belongs, can be unexpectedly indulgent to flights of fancy.

Now whereas Probability is a condition precedent to intelligent delight—in lawyer's phrase, *causa sine qua non*—the Marvellous is *causa proxima*, the positive stimulus of curiosity, transport, admiration—and, as Le Bossu says in his *Traité du Poëme Epique* (III, viii), 'L'Admiration est opposée à la Vraisemblance'. To arouse delight and wonder, yet only on condition of convincing! That is the problem, and the solution demands a delicate balance of opposites. The grand rivals, Fancy and Judgment, are seen as antagonist though not irreconcilable powers; Epic and Tragedy are the cock-pits in which they match their gallant birds, the Marvellous and the Probable. The metaphor is not to be pressed, yet it is appropriate to the age of Corneille and Dryden; and even in the staid close of the century the struggle continues, though in a somewhat different form. If Boileau is the figurehead of the Age of Taste, he is also the translator of Longinus, whose rapid and lasting popularity is highly significant. The Sublime is the ally, in part successor, of the Marvellous. Both strain against the sober Truth, though they acknowledge her limiting power; and both are conceived mainly as stimulants to emotion, for the simple reason that intellection and affection have been firmly distinguished and that intellection demands a dry light. The sharp distinction between what is true and what is pleasing persists, though with implications very different from d'Aubignac's, in the work of a critic far too great to be the mere slave of a system. 'Poetry,' says Johnson in his *Life of Milton*, 'is the art of uniting pleasure with truth, by calling imagination to the help of reason.' If reason is Truth's discoverer, imagination can be nothing but her costumier—and is not imagination the poet's distinctive function? Even a practising critic as fine as Johnson is hampered by such a definition. As for the aesthete, he must inevitably assume that, since pleasure is the poet's preserve, the responses of pleasure form the subject of aesthetic enquiry. Truth he will regard as the province of the moralist or the historian, to whom he will turn when necessary. His own business is to explain how the imaginative embodiment of truth (or falsehood?) evokes an emotional response.

In England, this enquiry took an important turn early in the eighteenth century. Older theorists had taken their stand upon the principles of Aristotle and the practice of the masters as these had been confirmed or modified by the judgments of men. After an age of argument, Taste was formed; and it was inevitable that the theory of the arts should now be sought in Taste itself. Its creden-

tials were duly examined and found on the whole to be satisfactory. for Taste had conducted the examination. To anatomize Taste and resolve the experience of art into its psychological components was a more formidable task; yet the first step seemed easy, and indeed followed naturally from d'Aubignac's main assumption that the pleasure of art has at least its groundwork in a skilful selection and arrangement of the pleasures of life. May we call this the 'recipe theory'? The cook begins by selecting palatable ingredients, though it is true that his skill and our own development may modify and complicate our enjoyment of his dishes. We must begin with the child's preference of sweet to sour if we wish to explain the more sophisticated pleasures of the gourmet. A taste for good art, it is very generally assumed, is closely analogous to a taste for good food and vintage wines, and is to be examined in the same way.

In 1712, Addison inaugurated a systematic enquiry along just these lines. He may be said to have established a pattern for later writers. In *Spectator* 409 (on Taste) he expresses the wish that there were more critics who, like Longinus, 'would enter into the very spirit and soul of fine writing, and show us the sources of that pleasure which rises in the mind upon the perusal of a noble work'. *Spectators* 411-421 (on the Pleasures of the Imagination) lay the foundation for such criticism. Here, as Johnson was to say, he 'draws the principles of invention from dispositions inherent in the minds of men', or, in other words, attempts to ground criticism upon a general psychology of pleasure. The pleasures of the imagination are placed midway between those of the senses and those of the reason; and, since Addison adopts the Aristotelian conception of imagination, they are all held to arise in the first place from sight, 'the most perfect and most delightful of all our senses'. Their exciting causes are Greatness, Novelty, and Beauty—the three sources of primary pleasure—but secondary pleasures arise from the operation of the mind in comparing an artistic imitation with its original; and these pleasures may be refined by selection, enriched by association, and reinforced by the passions. The subject is not one to be dispatched in a handful of breakfast-table essays; yet Addison is intelligent and systematic enough to give an impression of sketchy completeness. He does exclude from his discussion 'the mechanical rules which a man of very little taste may discourse upon'; but I think he felt that he had taken a bird's-eye view of the whole territory he designed to explore, that is, the sources of artistic pleasure as these are revealed by the psychology of the imagination. His map would have to be filled in and perhaps

modified; but it gave an adequate outline, which was accepted by numerous successors.

Addison's essential limitation lies in the terms of his commission. In an age when affection has been separated from intellection, explained in terms of automatic responses to stimuli, and assigned to the poet as his proper province, it will naturally seem that the pleasures of the imagination can be explained in isolation from the significance of the work of art as a whole. When Addison tells us that most readers prefer Milton's descriptions of Paradise to his descriptions of Hell because, though the poet's skill is equal in both, the rills of Eden are more pleasing than the burnt soil of the pit, we see how far d'Aubignac's 'recipe theory' can mislead critical judgment. But it is the general attitude—based on an accepted legal separation (not divorce) of reason and imagination—that is important. Addison cheerfully admits the supremacy of the pleasures of the understanding as 'founded on some new knowledge or improvement in the mind of man', and, for all his intelligence, does not suspect that imagination may also have improvements to offer. At most, Addison thinks, she may busy herself in 'copying after the understanding.' Indeed, one advantage of the pleasures of imagination is that they put no undue strain on the mind; a 'poem or a prospect' is more conducive to health than 'knotty or subtle disquisitions'; the 'man of polite imagination' enjoys pleasures not open to the vulgar; and, since few men know how to be idle and innocent, we must approve any gentle exercise of the faculties that may 'awaken them from sloth and idleness, without putting them upon any labour or difficulty'. Both Addison and his poetical apprentice Akenside (who hymns *The Pleasures of the Imagination* in four books of exceedingly blank verse) exalt Beauty as a revelation of the divine, but do not think of giving her a mind of her own. Addison's successors in theory—Burke, with all the clumsy power of his young mind, or Lord Kames with his intellectual ingenuity—struggle in the bog of a theory which assumes that it is the poet's task to stimulate feelings of beauty and sublimity and the aesthetician's to classify and dissect them. By the end of the century we find Archibald Allison discussing 'the emotion of taste' as though a gush of feelings were equivalent to the experience of a masterpiece.

That the aesthetics of the Age of Reason is predominantly sensory and emotional with pictures and passions as its main stock-in-trade is only superficially paradoxical. It is the Romantics who put the emphasis on thinking. Coleridge's theory of the Secondary Imagination, by fusing the affective and cognitive functions of the creative mind, provided a substitute for the dual

control of the neo-classicals; and the Coleridgean doctrine permeates romantic criticism. But Wordsworth's preface to *Lyrical Ballads* (third edition, 1802) sets the break with the eighteenth century in a clearer light. His contemptuous dismissal of talk about a taste for poetry 'as if it were a thing as indifferent as a taste for rope-dancing, or Frontiniac or Sherry' challenges the long reign of the virtuoso. When he relates the sentimental and sensational excesses of his time ('frantic novels, sickly and stupid German Tragedies, and deluges of idle and extravagant stories in verse') to other and more general causes that 'are now acting with a combined force to blunt the discriminating powers of the mind, and, unfitting it for all voluntary exertion, to reduce it to a state of almost savage torpor', he is laying his finger on a disease closely connected with the intellectual passivity which Addison had assumed in the pleasures of the imagination.

In developing his own theory, Wordsworth avoids such technical aesthetic terms as 'beauty' and 'sublimity', which had come to denote artistic 'effects' abstracted from the wholes in which they inhered. He prefers to speak of our 'interest' in a poem and the 'pleasure' associated with it. Pleasure, in poetry as in other fields of knowledge, is for him the inseparable adjunct of understanding:

We have no knowledge, that is, no general principles drawn from the contemplation of particular facts, but what has been built up by pleasure, and exists in us by pleasure alone.

It is true that, like Coleridge, he admits a 'colouring of the imagination' that makes common things new; but he does not think of this as interfering in any way with his work of tracing, 'truly though not ostentatiously, the primary laws of our nature'. The poet 'rejoices in the presence of truth', and his joy is but the life of his understanding. I should be surprised to learn that Wordsworth, when he first read the *Ode to a Grecian Urn*, did not hear an echo of his own ideas: 'Poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge; it is the impassioned expression which is the countenance of all Science.'

Wordsworth's ideas are no doubt broadly ours, except that our intellectual demands on poetry have grown even sterner in an age when the arts are finding it increasingly hard to hold their own against science on the one hand and the battalions of serious-minded barbarism on the other. The defence of poetry has long been necessary and has long played a main part in moulding aesthetic theory. We may thank Wordsworth and his fellows for providing a safe stronghold set on a high place, yet there are times when one hankers to explore a little in the valley. After all, when

Walter Scott confessed that he always gave a story a cocked hat and a sword before sending it out on its travels, he was only saying with a flourish what that sober observer Aristotle had already noted as a constant tendency in human nature and in art. May there not sometimes be a little discrepancy between truth and beauty? Here, as usual, we should distinguish the politics from the science of art. No doubt it is good for most poets to feel that beauty and truth are one, and it is certainly prudent for their supporters to say so. On the other hand, anyone who cares to examine a variety of good poems and good stories with an open mind may well decide to take Keats with a grain of salt. One of my reasons for thinking the neo-classical critics salubrious is that, when all their follies have evaporated, there remains in their writings a considerable salty sediment.

ANTOINE FAUCHERY, A FRIEND OF BAUDELAIRE

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ANTOINE FAUCHERY, who wrote *Lettres d'un Mineur en Australie* is mentioned by Asselineau as a companion of Baudelaire when he met him during 1846-1849. The *Lettres* were published in 1857 by Poulet Malassis et de Broise on the press at Alençon. My copy (recently acquired) carries the list of publications available from the editors. Along with *Odes Funambulesques* by Th. de Banville and *Histoire du Sonnet* by Charles Asselineau, one finds 'Les Fleurs du Mal, poésies par Ch. Baudelaire, in-12, sur papier d'Angoulême collé 3 fr.' Two more titles are promised 'Pour paraître en Juin 1857'. They are *Poésies Complètes* by Théodore de Banville and the *Curiosités Esthétiques* of Baudelaire.

It is exciting to realize that books as well as authors may have met that year *chez Poulet Malassis*!

The *Préface* to the *Lettres* comes from Théodore de Banville, who expresses affectionate admiration for the author and keen appreciation of the sincerity and simplicity of the book.

Antoine Fauchery was one of the band of young enthusiasts who

contributed to the *Corsaire-Satan* in 1843-1844, along with Mürger, Auguste Vitu, Charles de la Rounat and Théodore de Banville. 'Le *Corsaire* était dans ce temps-là un journal très lu,' observes Th. de Banville in his *Préface* to the *Lettres*. A little later Baudelaire was also one of the contributors.

For Théodore de Banville, Fauchery represents eternal youth. He finds this youthful quality in his stories and articles produced alone or in collaboration and in the man himself.

Or, dans ce temps de gamins blasés et de Lovelaces économes, je ne sais personne qui ait été et qui soit aussi jeune que Fauchery. Naïvement gais et tristes comme lui-même, affolés d'un rayon et essuyant entre deux sourires quelque larme furtive, ses nouvelles et ses contes ont eu, comme son caractère même, ce charmant duvet de pêche que rien n'imité, l'audace amoureuse et coupante de l'adolescence.' (*Préface aux Lettres*)

Antoine Fauchery came from a poor home (*sans patrimoine*, says Banville). His first love was architecture. He turned from that to painting, then to engraving. A chance meeting with Mürger brought him to the *Corsaire-Satan* and for some years he devoted his energies to writing. It is during these years that Asselineau mentions him as being with Baudelaire. Speaking of Baudelaire, Asselineau writes: 'Je ne le vis que très rarement de 46 à 49: une fois sur le boulevard, une fois au Louvre, une fois dans un café du quartier latin avec Mürger, Deroy, Fauchery etc.'

In the year of the Revolutions, Fauchery's eager enthusiasm flamed with the desire to strike a blow for freedom—Baudelaire on the barricades, Fauchery for Poland. He set off with some Poles and with Félix Nadar (Félix Nadar to whom Baudelaire dedicated 'Le Rêve d'un Curieux') to emulate Byron in Greece by liberating Poland. Difficulties were encountered in the German States where transit would be granted, then withdrawn. After many adventures and misadventures, Nadar and Fauchery returned at last to Paris. Their friends had given them up for lost. Banville relates how they were welcomed.

Depuis deux semaines déjà, la nouvelle, un peu vague il est vrai, de leur mort nous avait jetés dans une affliction profonde. Nous ne cessions pas de déplorer tant de jeunesse, d'inspiration et des amitiés si charmantes, tant de trésors perdus si vite. Un soir, entre autres, au café de Buci, nous parlions pour la millième fois, et toujours avec les mêmes angoisses, de nos amis absents, quand tout à coup, comme la foudre elle-même, nous vîmes et nous sentîmes à la fois tomber dans nos bras, avec des rires,

avec des larmes, avec de fraternels baisers, non pas Fauchery et Nadar, mais, comme le disaient leurs passeports: Nadarski et Faucheriski, coiffés du bonnet polonais carré couleur groseille avec une bordure en astracan noir. Devinez s'il y a eu entre nous tous des propos interrompus et des tirades homériques! Je crois même que depuis ce soir-là Nadar n'a cessé de parler sans s'arrêter, malgré ses succès d'écrivain et de photographe, et Fauchery aurait continué aussi, mais la fréquentation des Anglais lui a forcément inculqué des habitudes silencieuses.

Nadar found fortune and fame in photography. Fauchery, after a short creative period in Paris, heard the call of adventure once more and set off gaily to bring home the golden fleece.

Mais les vrais voyageurs sont ceux-là seuls qui partent
Pour partir.²

Ferran in referring to the 'équipe du *Corsaire-Satan*' mentions Fauchery and his sudden departure: 'Antoine Fauchery, qui transporte au café son attirail de graveur, avant de partir un beau jour pour le pays de l'or, quoique l'or ne le tentât guère.'³

Fauchery's account of his experiences suggests more interest in places and people than in the elusive metal.

He set sail from London in the *Emily* on 23rd July 1852 and reached Melbourne in mid-October, a non-stop voyage. He comments grimly:

Chez les Anglais, quelle que soit la longueur de trajet, il est toujours direct. La tempête en vous prenant à cheval sur une épave pourrait quelquefois vous permettre de toucher ou de voir la terre—le capitaine jamais.

July to October was a rapid voyage. Most of the gold diggers expected four months of sea and salt beef.

The *Emily* offered average conditions. For the fare paid, 625 francs, there was provided a weekly allocation of ship's biscuit, salt beef, salt pork, smoked fish, with a small quantity of flour, rice, potatoes, butter, tea, brown sugar, salt and pepper. The cabin was barely the size of a bathhouse cubicle, with bunks, and the passengers provided the mattress and any equipment they desired.

Fauchery describes the boredom of the long days at sea, broken only by the call when hot water was to be distributed, and the meals which the passengers put together for the cook to heat, the crowded state of the dark sleeping boxes, which make him think of the 'cercueils des pauvres', the long alley where most of the passengers spend all their time, and the stolid Englishwomen, careless of all

'soins de beauté'. wearing from first to last the same dress, in spite of the ravages of sea-sickness.

Que dire en effet d'une robe de barège à trois ou quatre volants, robe d'apparat, qui essuie le mal de mer depuis plus de trois semaines! de faux cheveux en soie—oui, en soie, qui jadis étaient noirs et maintenant sont rougis par le soleil des tropiques!

But for himself Fauchery makes no complaint. 'Nous vivons mal, très mal, c'est vrai.' But he sees no way of improving on the conditions that prevail. 'conditions qui sont les mêmes à bord de tous les navires, la mer ne comportant pas d'autres'.

The sailor is in a class of his own—and bears no resemblance to the romantic teller of tales one might meet in a novel. He is laconic, morose, resigned to the way of life he has chosen, where the only joys come from tobacco and rum, where exotic lands are remembered only for the quality of their brandy. Fauchery spares a moment to meditate on their lot.

Enlevé jeune aux galets de la plage, il n'a plus qu'un souvenir confus des toits du pays. Son pays maintenant flotte à l'aventure, c'est son bord; son hamac est sa maison, le grand mât son clocher; et lorsqu'il voit au loin se dessiner une voile, il dit: 'Tiens, un pays qui passe,' ou si la voile tourbillonne et disparaît dans la tempête, il murmure: 'Tiens, un pays qui sombre.'

As the book continues, this style disappears. One feels it belongs more to the story teller of Paris than to the miner grappling with the practical problems day by day.

The albatross, 'ce roi des mers dont les ailes déployées mesurent trois mètres et au-delà', is a welcome visitor. One terrifying storm breaks the monotony and for some days meals are reduced to ship's biscuits only. One shares the relief of the passengers when at last the cry goes up: 'Terre! Terre!' But they have not yet reached port. They must wait for three days outside the Heads of Port Phillip Bay, so great is the number of ships bringing the seekers of gold. Numerous too are the ships that swing at anchor in the Bay, deserted by their crews.

The gold rush has brought lodging difficulties and half the population sleep out of doors, in spite of the fear of bushrangers.

John Bull n'aime pas les conflits à main armée; sa roideur et sa gaucherie naturelle l'en éloignent. C'est un lourd taureau gonflé de bière, qui vous écrase de son poids, mais que la détonation d'une capsule inquiète. Il n'a pas, comme nous, été élevé au bruit de la fusillade et du canon; il ignore presque l'usage des

armes à feu, ne chassant guère et ne pouvant se battre à plus d'une longueur de bras sous peine d'être perdu.

He admires the future city already marked out in long, wide, right-angled streets. He considers the site well chosen except for the valley in the centre where heavy rains cause floods and take a toll of lives. He is amused to note that monuments, houses, hotels are all built on the model of London and even use the same names. He is surprised at the lack of fuel—there is nothing to burn but wood! The population is composed mainly of 'younger sons' and convicts who have obtained their freedom. They throng the public houses and build up vast fortunes for the publicans. Gold won on the fields is being squandered in two or three days of drinking and fighting. Newcomers whose resources are exhausted camp in Canvas Town between the river and the bay. And between the town and Canvas Town an immense bazaar has sprung up where anything at all is on offer in exchange for money or goods. Basic food is cheap—beef, mutton, bread, tea and sugar—but anything else seems fantastically dear.

The five with whom Fauchery shares his room come from five different counties in England. The printers earn 175 francs each week, the labourer 25 francs per day, the bricklayer 50-60 francs per day. One hotel is offering 500 francs per week for a French cook. And our writer sighs: 'Tout le corps académique aurait moins de succès qu'un bon couvreur. Savoir user de ses bras!'

Fauchery's own resources are down to 150 francs and a decision on his future is urgent. After a visit to the French priest at Heidelberg (whom he finds engaged in the homely task of sweeping out the church), Fauchery sets out for Ballarat. There are only two ways of going to the fields, in a dray or on foot. Owing to the lightness of his pocket, Fauchery will go on foot, after taking the boat as far as Geelong. He remarks on the monotony of the landscape, of the trees, 'arbres d'une seule et même espèce, courts, trapus, à tête ronde, en tous points semblables à des pommiers—moins les pommes'. There is beyond Geelong a well established vineyard, where some Swiss from Neuchâtel had begun in 1840 to cultivate the grape. Fauchery considers that the situation is ideal for wine making. Unfortunately, the taste of the population is for a harsher beverage.

C'est à un petit noyau composé de Suisses du canton de Neuchâtel, venus en Australie il y a douze ou quinze ans, qu'on doit ces luxuriantes splendeurs végétales. Ils ont implanté et cultivent les magnifiques ceps du Cap. Maintenant le soleil ne demanderait pas mieux que de féconder ici le fameux vin de

Constance, tout aussi bien qu'à Cap-Town, si on laissait faire le soleil. Mais la population, peu friande de vins, hormis ceux d'Espagne, a imaginé de confectionner avec les produits du cru, à l'aide d'une addition de sucre et d'alcool, des Porto et des Xérès. C'est d'un goût médiocre, mais les Suisses, au point de vue de leurs intérêts, n'avaient pas à protester contre ces profanations.

The wine of Constance! Could it be that the wine which Baudelaire is thought to have tasted during the voyage of the *Alcide* and the call at the port of Capetown is a wine of Swiss origin to which the climate of the Cape has given a richer development? 'Le constance' seems at least to have been equally known and appreciated by Fauchery.

Je préfère au constance, à l'opium, au nuits,
L'élixir de ta bouche où l'amour se pavane . . . '

As Fauchery follows the track to the fields, he has abundant time to examine the trees and animals of the Australian bush. He takes a poor view of the eucalyptus forest!

un bois sans taillis, presque uniquement peuplé de grands arbres aux feuilles grises et longues, dans le genre de celles du bouleau, attachées à un branchage noueux qui s'élancent en jets épileptiques d'une souche robuste en apparence, mais généralement pourrie au cœur. Une maladie implacable ronge ces pousses gigantesques, et par une brise du printemps, elles s'ébranchent comme nos chênes s'effeuillent en automne. En quelques places de petits pins bien secs et bien noirs secouent leurs maigres panaches au-dessus d'un terrain stérile qui ne produit ni une fleur ni un fruit et n'est couvert que de bois mort ou d'une herbe grossière comme chiendent sur laquelle on ne peut même pas s'asseoir . . .

Au milieu de ces vastes solitudes vous ne rencontrez que le *kangaroo*, dont les côtelettes d'un goût plus que médiocre témoignent assez de la sobriété de la région. Le *kangaroo-rat*, petit *kangaroo* de la grosseur du lapin, l'opossum, moitié *kangaroo*, moitié chat sauvage, et l'écureuil volant se partagent les troncs d'arbres où ils gisent le jour et d'où ils sortent la nuit pour faire retentir les échos de leurs cris plaintifs. Ces animaux de mœurs inoffensives et de chair exécrationnelle semblent appartenir à une même famille: tous portent la poche sous le ventre, sac de voyage donné sans doute par la Providence pour qu'à la première occasion eux et leur lignée soient prêts à abandonner une contrée ingrate.

Fauchery delights in the great variety of bird life and especially of the parrots of all kinds. He admires 'le petit perroquet gris et rose, le plus rare de tous, le dahlia bleu des volatiles'. He describes the bird assemblies, the bright colours and the graceful movement, spoiled only by the raucous calls.

Par une heure de soleil, ces centres de réunions atteignent les proportions les plus fantastiques pour l'œil d'un Européen. Les cacatoës blancs au casque jaune ou rouge, les petites perruches vertes, les perroquets aux mille couleurs battent les ailes, font la roue autour des branches, se poursuivent dans l'herbe, s'agitent, se mêlent et s'accouplent dans des étreintes de colombes. On croirait voir la nature à travers un kaléidoscope; les arbres sont multicolores et le terrain n'est plus qu'un tapis animé, où les rubis, les turquoises, les émeraudes et les opales s'entrelacent en capricieuses et folles arabesques. Seulement, pour jouir sans réserve de ce spectacle magique, il est prudent de se boucher les oreilles.

The arrival at the Ballarat goldfields brings another disappointment. 'Ces Eldorados tant vantés sont beaucoup au-dessous de l'opinion qu'on s'en est formée.' They look like gigantic earth-works, the ground having been dug over for two miles in all directions. The miners, who look like 'des terrassiers mal mis', are even law-abiding! Fauchery regrets that he has kept his pistols which he might have sold for a good price in Melbourne. He teams up with two other 'new-chums' and finds that the verbal agreement to work together and share the results of their toil is sufficient guarantee. Of what use would be a written contract where there are no Courts?

Government control by the miner's licence limits the amount of land that any group can prospect and thereby prevents the formation of large companies. The miners work in partnerships of two or three or four. The equipment required is of the simplest: a pick, a spade, a rope, a basin, a bucket and a tub. The full description of digging and washing for gold is set out in detail.

For twenty-two months, Fauchery dug for gold at Ballarat. Everything which had at first seemed strange became commonplace after the first week. Work went on from six till four with a break from digging every Sunday to carry out the domestic tasks: laundry, tent building or repairing, wood cutting, baking of bread. 'Je suis donc un peu blanchisseur, charpentier, bûcheron, cuisinier, et boulanger . . . Tous ces petits talents bien modestes, bien élémentaires, tout à fait étrangers au monde élégant, mais d'une utilité incontestable.' Fauchery accepts the changed environment

with a calm which he refuses to call courage. The decision to come to Australia once made and the journey begun, there could be no turning back. Once in Australia, he must remain until he has funds to pay the passage back. A man must work but the work is not beyond his strength. The early days brought blisters and aches but it is only a question of time until the heavy work seems quite ordinary. 'Il n'y a que la première ampoule qui coûte.'

The friendliness of the diggers, their willingness to give advice or lend a hand cause surprise, especially in view of the well known English reserve. 'Il est vrai qu'ils obligent froidement, mais sans bruit, sans éclat, et largement.' Fauchery admires the honesty of the gold buyers, now that the miners know the value of gold. Each miner keeps his find in matchboxes, the weight of which is known according to the name of the maker on the box. A large find would be kept in a pannikin.

Living conditions are of the simplest. Bread may be bought at 25 sous the pound. For the rest, a tree is chopped to provide the fire which burns night and morning before the camp. Skinny sheep may be purchased by the quarter and the grilling of mutton goes on each morning and each night.

Dès le point du jour le feu flambe à la porte de chaque tente. C'est le digger qui, sorti de son trou, rallume son arbre et fait frire d'autres côtelettes. A la nuit tombante le feu flambe, le même mouton grille, et ainsi de suite. Cela dure jusqu'à la dernière branche et la dernière côtelette, qui se remplacent alors par un nouvel arbre et un nouveau mouton.

Fauchery finds this life a little monotonous, in spite of the charm of the open air and the physical pleasure of lying on one's back under a tall tree with one's feet in the sun. He remarks with surprise on the remarkably good health of the community.

J'ai connu des gens qui ont laissé dans l'humidité des trous et l'eau des marécages des rhumatismes ayant résisté en Europe à tous les traitements imaginables. Mais si les rhumatismes vous quittent, l'ennui vous reste . . . Il vous faut donc, moitié taupe et moitié sauvage, vous résigner à vivre ennuyé d'avoir à toujours faire le lendemain ce que vous avez fait la veille, et cela durant des semaines, des mois, des années jusqu'à ce que la chance enfin veuille bien vous rembourser en or toutes vos dépenses de patience et d'abnégation.

Chance, that is what ruled the goldfields. Fortune came to those who seemed least likely to deserve it. Often it would be a sailor who struck it lucky, and in a fortnight's orgy all his gold would

pass to the publicans in Melbourne. A French ex-sailor named Antoine won 120 pounds of gold in three weeks (to be shared with two partners). Antoine was back on the fields within a month, penniless. Four times while Fauchery was in Australia, Antoine found a fortune, his share in all coming to 150,000 francs. And when last seen, all he had left he was wearing, two gold ear-rings. '150,000 francs dépensés, gaspillés, avalés! Que de petits verres!'

The only safe thing to do is to quit the fields when fortune first shows favour. And Fauchery tells of the finding of the Monster Nugget, 132 pounds in weight, which five sailors from the *Great Britain* dug out on the night of their arrival. They sold their rights next morning and departed with their prize.

Fauchery's team were right on the Eureka lode –right on it but with 60 feet of rock between them and the gold. Fauchery had sold his share just before this final disappointment and he returned to Melbourne intending to try his fortune in Peru. Obligated to wait in Melbourne he noticed the large number of foreigners and the lack of any meeting place for them. He decided to risk his small capital in establishing a French café. He was able to purchase a French billiard table, and by some miraculous wangling of credits obtained a lease of a room 22 feet long and 10 feet wide with courtyard, kitchen and stable for £12 per week. His customers were numerous. 'Je faisais de si bon café, sans doute parce que je n'étais pas né dans la limonade.' His affairs flourished and he was encouraged to spend all his profits in painting and refurnishing his gay little café with marble topped tables and floral wallpaper. But while the paint was still wet, disaster struck. Melbourne passed through a financial crisis, with bankruptcies galore, fires destroying warehouses, shops going out of business, workmen being dismissed. There was a slack period on the mines, bitter protestation against the miner's tax, the Eureka Stockade and martial law. Fauchery had no sympathy for those responsible.

Ce déplorable conflit exerça encore une influence funeste sur l'opinion publique. On crut longtemps aux insurgés une arrière-pensée de révolution politique, ayant pour but l'indépendance du district de Victoria et son érection en république.

In the crash of larger enterprises, Fauchery's café fell. 'De jour en jour, le vide se faisait plus persistant autour de mes tables de marbre.' He realised that he had counted on a stability not yet accomplished in Australia.

J'avais tenté de faire asseoir confortablement les gens dans le pays du monde où les gens veulent le plus être debout, toujours

prêts à suivre dans ses campements une fortune capricieuse qui tous les jours change de garnison. Je m'étais trompé, voilà tout !

Two compatriots came to his aid, Gustave Cursier and Adet, wine merchants from Bordeaux. They offered him half of a small stock of groceries they had, to go and set up in business on the gold-fields. Somewhat unwillingly Fauchery was constrained to accept. He announced to his landlord that he must break his lease, he sold his new marble tables to a dealer, and set out once more for the fields. It appears to have been the most difficult of his metamorphoses. To console himself for this hurt to his pride, he must dream of Paris as he folds his paper pokes. The grocery store is moderately successful and as soon as enough money comes in, he begins to plan his return to France.

The account of the return journey allows for a digression to bring in the Australian aborigine. Fauchery states that the number of the aborigines is unknown, but that it is assumed that since the coming of the whites their numbers have been reduced. Those with whom he meets know a little English, dress rather fantastically in cast-off European clothing or in rugs made by sewing together opossum skins. They approach the whites only to beg for bread or tea or brandy, 'liqueur pour laquelle ils se feraient couper par petits morceaux.' The women are the workers and carriers and are allowed none of the titbits the men may acquire by persistent begging. 'Encore un petit coin du monde où la femme me paraît être sacrifiée.'

Fauchery comments on the large number of Chinese who have found their way to Ballarat. He admires their industry and honesty and expects them to play a big part in developing agriculture in the new land. But he notices with concern that of 35,000 Chinese immigrants to Australia, only two were female, two girls of 7 and 12. He quotes at length the eloquent plea put up by the Chinese against the threat of deportation.

Fauchery returned to Europe in 1856, and almost at once found an editor in Poulet-Malassis. He appears to have turned then to a Government appointment to visit and report on Australia, China and India.

The *Lettres d'un Mineur en Australie*, contemporary with *Les Fleurs du Mal* and written by one who had been a friend of Baudelaire, might possibly contain some echo or suggest some source. Fauchery also endures 'ennui', but of a different kind. There is just one possible echo in 'Les sept vieillards' (1859). In speaking of the big German ships which occasionally visit Australia, Fauchery calls them 'gigantesques gabares'. The stanza of 'Les sept vieillards'

which gave Baudelaire much trouble was the last. The various versions for first and third line were:

Ma raison vainement réclamait son empire
Bien en vain ma raison voulait prendre l'empire
Bien en vain ma raison voulait prendre la barre
Vainement ma raison voulait prendre la barre
Et mon âme dansait, (toujours) dansait comme un navire
Et mon âme dansait, dansait, comme un navire.

Baudelaire sent these with the drawing of a ship in a storm to 'M': 'Gardez ces différentes versions. Je ferai la bonne chez vous.'

'On ne sait si le destinataire était Malassis ou Morel' is the comment of Y.-G. Le Dantec in the edition of *La Pléiade*. If it were Malassis, if the conversation of Fauchery were as picturesque as his writing, is it not possible that the version reached may have been suggested by the 'gigantesques gabares' of Hamburg?—

Et mon âme dansait, dansait, vieille gabarre.—

Baudelaire has preferred the older spelling.

A First Edition of *Lettres d'un Mineur en Australie* promised the pleasure of turning over pages which came from the press of Poulet Malassis. It brought the unexpected joy of meeting a shrewd and simple-hearted observer of Victoria in the gold rush days.

NOTES

¹ Etude biographique de Baudelaire, par E. Crépet, revue et mise au jour par J. Crépet, Messein, 1906.

² Baudelaire: *Le Voyage*.

³ Ferran: *L'Esthétique de Baudelaire*.

⁴ Baudelaire: *Sed non satiata*.

THE MYTHOLOGY OF THE TREE IN 'LES CONTEMPLATIONS'

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THE image of the tree, which has prevailed in European literature from earliest times, is one of a group of major images which are inexhaustibly suggestive. The sacred oak of the Druids and the oak groves where their rites were enacted, the mantic oak of Dodona sacred to Zeus, the world-ash Yggdrasil of Norse mythology, and the *figus ruminalis* of the Roman Forum, thought to embody the destiny of Rome, attest the awe that the great Hercynian and other forests once inspired in their Indo-European denizens.

Though there are now only vestiges of the original oak and beech forests of Gaul, the symbolic possibilities of the tree have never been lost to mind, and in our own age, at least from the botanizing Rousseau onwards, vegetation has figured prominently in the poetic imagination. Indeed, the ideas of growth, change, evolution, death and rebirth, which attained literary eminence when the immobility of classical interiors had been forsaken, were perhaps originally inspired and later sustained by the spectacle of vegetal nature. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre's *Etudes de la Nature* (1784) and *Harmonies de la Nature* (1815), a strange mixture of fantasy and Newtonian physics, pointed the way, for the generation of writers by whom they were so much read, to an apotheosis of 'la puissance végétale', which their author considers (v. *Harmonies*, in *Oeuvres*, VIII, 1818) to have descended from the skies (p.5) bearing a promise to man of longevity and ultimate regeneration (p.11) and revealing itself as the prototype and support of all life (p.13). This immemorial notion of vegetation as a theophany exercised a well-known charm over Romantic sensibilities. But we are concerned here with the tree in particular which stands for and embodies the properties of the vegetation over which it towers: 'O végétation! esprit! matière! force! / Couverte de peau rude ou de vivante écorce!' (Hugo, *Voix int.*, X).

Of Hugo's pantheistic postulate (suggested by Pythagoras, Lucretius, and, in his own day, by Boucher de Perthe's *La Création*) that 'tout est plein d'âmes', trees are a noteworthy substantiation. 'Ils semblent animés de passions,' Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had said (loc.cit., p.376) and Hugo echoes him in *Les Contemplations* (to which we must limit our attention here) with numerous details

The Mythology of the Tree in 'Les Contemplations'

of the tree's sensibility and its mysterious utterances. In certain poems of this collection the poet draws as near as it is possible for any modern to a literal belief in the animateness of the tree. 'Vis, buisson!' (V, xvii) The influence of Laprade's *La Mort d'un chêne* (1842) may also count for something in Hugo's statement that '(la) nature mêle une âme aux rameaux verts' (III, xiii, 1843). Yet he insists in the *Journal de l'exil* that he was the first in the century to speak of the tree's soul. 'Dans ma vie,' he adds, 'j'ai constamment dit, lorsque je voyais casser une branche d'arbre, arracher une feuille: Laissez cette branche d'arbre, laissez cette feuille, ne troublez pas l'harmonie de la nature . . .' (Sept., 1854), thus resuming the perennial taboo on acts tending to offend the sylvan spirits (cf. Laprade, *Le Bûcheron*).

Hugo, as also Lamartine, perceived in nature a language, which might be deciphered as an ancient inscription, an obscure alphabet, or heard as a poem, a hymn, a universal music. Hence, 'le moindre arbrisseau parle' (I, xviii; cf. III, xxiv, xxix; VI, xxvi, etc.). Further, trees are pensive (V, xvi), they talk among themselves (II, ix; IV, xii) 'avec leur grande voix' (I, x), they utter pledges (I, xxix), and make signs to those who pass (V, vi). Their speech may turn to poetry (I, xiv; II, i) or blend with the music of nature (I, iv, xxii); for they are the strings of nature's lyre: '. . . Sombre tressaillement des chênes éternels, / Vous êtes l'harmonie et la musique même!' (III, xxi; cf. I, xxvii; III, xxx). Thus, as if hung still with the brazen vessels of Dodona, the articulate, melodious woods (V, xx, xxv) form the most compelling strophe of nature's incantation.

It is not surprising, in view of this, to find that the wood is that domain which, like his pagan ancestors, the Romantic Hugo most readily describes as 'sacré', 'saint', and which he opposes to the profaneness of civilization (II, xxi; IV, xv). In contrast to the life of the city the forest offers its 'branchage auguste' (III, xxv), its 'doux rameaux bénis' (I, xxvii); for it is the most hallowed portion of an already 'sainte nature' (I, x). It is the poet's cherished retreat: 'O forêts! bois profonds! solitudes! asiles!' (III, ii), the place of the deepest Romantic *mystère* and *silence* (III, xix, xxiv) and of the poetic *ivresse* (V, xxvi). Further, 'au sein des bois' man finds the most propitious place for instruction in the working of divine purpose (V, iii); for the forest is a theophany:

Aussi, taillis sacrés où Dieu même apparaît,
Arbres religieux, chênes, mousses, forêt,
Forêt! c'est dans votre ombre et dans votre mystère,
C'est dans votre branchage auguste et solitaire,
Que je veux abriter mon sépulcre ignoré . . . (III, xxiv)

Hugo's 'bois sacrés' (VI,xxiii;cf.VI.ix) recalls the well-known statement of the *Génie du christianisme*:

Les forêts ont été les premiers temples de la Divinité . . . Les forêts des Gaules ont passé à leur tour dans les temples de nos pères, et nos bois de chênes ont ainsi maintenu leur origine sacrée' (III.I,viii).

Again, the sacredness of the wood is the central theme of Laprade's trilogic *Poème de l'arbre*. Hugo's portrayal of the oak as a 'noir pilastre' (II,xvii) and of trees as 'noirs pilastres' (III,xxx) conforms to this wide-spread notion of the wood as temple. The poet, alone, on many expressions of this view, remains faithful to the spirituality of the world's oldest ritual site. The theme is particularly frequent in the poems belonging to the years of Hugo's exile, when the trees of the verdant microcosm of Jersey, closed off from the political, literary and other turmoils of Paris and the mainland, must have seemed pure and antediluvian.

A fundamental of the Romantic experience of the wood, which seems to bespeak a genuine experience of the sacred, is its remarkable ambiguity. The notorious contradictions in the poetic reasoning of Hugo have been considered to evidence the 'primitiveness' of it. Thus, in the particular case, the wood, usually thought to be tenanted by the beneficent guardians of life (v.esp.III,xxix), can also on occasion inspire a sacred dread. The wood of the early poem *A Albert Dürer (Voix int.)* is a place of 'horreur', a 'monde hideux'; that of *Le Satyre*, a 'lieu lugubre', whose 'terreur noire' is impenetrable to the light of dawn. The woods of *Les Contemplations* are inhabited by 'stryges' (III,xxviii); their trees are 'farouches' (II,ix;III,xxx.I.676) and loom as 'grands fantômes noirs' (V,xvii) or they are likened to hydras: 'Ces hydres que, le jour, on appelle des arbres, / Se tordent dans la nuit' (VI,vi;cf.III,xxx). Hence the assertion in *Horror*: ' . . . à l'esprit la forêt communique / Un tremblement contagieux . . . ' Elsewhere Hugo informs us that the forest can borrow the 'œil lumineux' of the chimæra and cast luminous glances that the poet is bound to respect. In the line: 'L'amour et la terreur de l'antique forêt' (*Le Bûcheron*) Laprade has neatly expressed these mingled feelings of attraction and repulsion, that the sacred grove seems to have aroused still in the nineteenth century.

A particular feature of Hugo's conception of the tree as sacred is his stress upon its oracular power. In this he is remembering the oak of Dodona and is no doubt following a vogue begun by Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (cf.loc.cit., p.377) and continued by the Romantics generally (cf.Vigny, *La Dryade*). But the idea is already

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old in Hugo (cf. *Les Voix int., A un riche*) when in *Les Contemplations* he states that the poet is above all an 'interlocuteur des arbres' (I.xxvii): '. . . et, quand tu vois des arbres, / Parles-tu quelquefois à ces religieux?' (VI.xxvi) 'Prêtres' and 'religieux' are frequent qualificatives for trees in Hugo (cf. Chénier, *Hermès*); for they are found 'en prière' (VI.vi) or, again, they form verses of nature's Bible (VI.xxiii). They are represented as mouths in parts of *La Légende*, and in *Les Contemplations* appear as tongues attesting the existence of God (cf. VI.vi). '. . . Le livre effrayant des forêts' (I.v) is therefore to be carefully scanned for its divine content.

. . . Je cause
Avec toutes les voix de la métempsycose.
Avant de commencer le grand concert sacré.
Le moineau, le buisson, l'eau vive dans le pré,
La forêt, basse énorme, et l'aile et la corolle,
Tous ces doux instruments m'adressent la parole.
Je suis l'habitué de l'orchestre divin.
Si je n'étais songeur, j'aurais été sylvain. (I.xxvii)

Again, in the apostrophe *Aux arbres*:

Vous m'avez vu cent fois, dans la vallée obscure,
Avec ces mots que dit l'esprit à la nature,
Questionner tout bas vos rameaux palpitants . . . (III.xxiv)

The reasons for Hugo's devotion to the tree seem much of a kind with the motives of more primitive tree-worship. On the one hand, the tree is observed to live out a 'history' comparable to that of man: it knows birth and death, increase and decline. 'As is a mighty tree so, indeed, is a man; his hair are leaves and his skin is its outer bark' (*Bṛihadâraṇyaka-Upanishad*, III.28). Hence man's sympathy with it. But, on the other hand, unlike that of man, the life of the tree is periodically renewed and its immortality is assured. 'A tree when it is felled springs up from its root in a newer form; from what root does man spring forth when he is cut off by death?' (*ibid.*) Hence its consecration as the abode of a supernatural power. As to the sympathies existing between man and the tree, Bernardin de Saint-Pierre had insisted upon them in the *Harmonies* (*loc.cit.*, p.68ff.) and Hugo had very early made similar observations: 'Tout objet dont le bois se compose répond / A quelque objet pareil dans la forêt de l'âme' (*A un riche*). Indeed, the thought expressed in the apostrophe to an old man in *Les Contemplations*: 'Frère sombre et pensif des arbres frissonnants, / Tu laisses choir tes ans ainsi qu'eux leur feuillage . . .' (III.ii) was a commonplace of Romanticism (cf. Millevoye, *La Chute des feuilles*). In virtue of their

ancient affinity, the whole forest bows as the poet approaches his chosen place of meditation (I.v;IV.xv) and it is to the forest trees that Hugo confides his recent bereavement:

Les arbres murmuraient: C'est le père qui vient!
 Les ronces écartaient leurs branches desséchées;
 Je marchais à travers les humbles croix penchées.
 Disant je ne sais quels doux et funèbres mots;
 Et je m'agenouillais au milieu des rameaux
 Sur la pierre qu'on voit blanche sur la verdure.
 (*A celle qui est restée en France*)

And so he could say: 'Arbres de la forêt, vous connaissez mon âme!' (III.xxiv)

But, 'tout gonflés de printemps' (III.xxii;cf.I.iv), trees stand for life itself,—which Hugo characteristically perceives as 'la pénétration de la sève sacrée' (VI.x), —and, in particular, for life that is ever renewable. The vital energies permeating Hugo's universe are concentrated in the forest. Accordingly, the associations of the tree with love and fertility are among his oldest and most constant. '... L'amour chasse aux bocages' (I.xiv;cf.II.xii.xvi.xvii;V.xx.xxv). The tree thus becomes an exemplar of human growth and increase: 'Les arbres croissent en feuillages; / Que notre âme croisse en amour!' (II.xxii) The wood is Venus' chosen ground (II.xxvi; cf.III.ix) and only the exorcist can wrest her secret from the elms (III.x). Perhaps, then, it was to learn the secret of spontaneous regeneration that the poet consulted his sylvan oracles. Lamartine, in *Le Chêne*, had dwelt with envy on 'cette sève rajeunie'; Laprade had seen in the tree the paradigm of universal rebirth: 'Comme l'arbre, à son jour, quitte et reprend sa feuille. / . . . Le monde en ses saisons doit se renouveler' (*Le Bûcheron*); in *La Légende* the trees of Babylon, 'rajeunis sans cesse et reverdis', vaunt their own unfading, as witnesses to both the beginning and the end of the world. Finally, the piece entitled *Cadaver* in *Les Contemplations* gives striking expression to the old belief in the resurrection of the dead through vegetation:

. . . Je vais être terre, et germer.
 Et fleurir comme sève, et, comme fleur, aimer!
 Je vais me rajeunir dans la jeunesse énorme
 Du buisson, de l'eau vive, et du chêne, et de l'orme . . .

Hence, already, 'la chevelure sent le grand frisson des arbres'; and, despite its lugubrious title, the poem is one of joy, pervaded with 'l'air de l'éternité, puissant, calme, salubre'. The tree has revealed

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itself as saviour (cf. Lamartine. *Milly*; George Sand, *Les sept cordes*).

It is in this regard, also, that we must mention Hugo's yearning to identify himself with the life of the tree. He suggests the poet should return to a vegetal status, 'Il faut que le poète aux semences fécondes / Soit comme ces forêts vertes, fraîches, profondes . . .' (I.xxviii), participating in their slow, steady growth, in the divine energy that sustains them immortally, '. . . Je suis calme et pur comme vous. / Comme au ciel vos parfums, mon culte à Dieu s'élance . . .' (III.xxiv). Of one moment in his ascent of 'l'échelle des êtres' he remembers: 'Je fus un chêne, et j'eus des autels et des prêtres' (III.i) and he can speak, on another occasion, of 'mes rameaux' (II.xxv). Cf. *Lueur au couchant*:

. . . et, pendant que mon esprit qui rêve
Dans la sereine nuit des penseurs étoilés,
Et dresse ses rameaux à leurs lueurs mêlés . . .

Bernardin de Saint-Pierre contributes what is perhaps the first instance in Romanticism of the World-tree image, here apparently a magnification of the Tree of Life. He ends his curious reflections on the significance of vegetation with the remark:

La puissance végétale doit s'étendre dans tous ces mondes, comme la puissance solaire. Elle doit, de siècle en siècle, en accroître les sphères et en varier les pôles. Elle est un arbre de vie, dont les racines sont dans le soleil, les tiges dans les planètes, les branches dans les satellites, et dont les plus petits rameaux s'étendent jusqu'aux comètes invisibles qui parcourent les extrémités du système de l'astre du jour (op.cit.,p.141).

Les Contemplations furnish several interesting examples of this image, and there are approximations to it in *La Nature*, *Booz endormi*, and later in *Le Satyre*. In *Je lisais. Que lisais-je?* . . . the unity and diversity of the world are figured as the ramifications of a tree:

Oui, la création tout entière, les choses,
Les êtres, les rapports, les éléments, les causes,
Rameaux dont le ciel clair perce le réseau noir,
L'arabesque des bois sur les cuivres du soir,
La bête, le rocher, l'épi d'or, l'aile peinte,
Tout cet ensemble obscur, végétation sainte,
Compose en se croisant ce chiffre énorme: DIEU.

(This is a curious parallel to the Indian conception of the cosmic *açvatha* tree as the manifestation of the Brahman. V. *Katha-Upani-*

shad, II.3.1). In *Les Malheureux* joy appears as the 'fruit du grand arbre douleur' (V.xxvi;cf.I.xxiii), while the sun is the fruit of a world-tree, whose 'branches funèbres' are the darkness of night (V.xxvi); in the vision of the universe that ends *A celle qui est restée en France* the celestial bodies are again 'fruits vermeils des divines ramées' (cf. 'l'arbre hasard', III.xxx; 'l'arbre du temps', V.xxvi). Again, in *Pleurs dans la nuit* Eternity is imaged as a world-tree:

L'arbre Eternité vit sans faîte et sans racines.
Ses branches sont partout, proches du ver, voisines
Du grand astre doré;
L'espace voit sans fin croître la branche Nombre.
Et la branche Destin, végétation sombre,
Emplit l'homme effaré.

Mere 'passants pénétrés de fibres éternelles', we are, he continues, inextricably caught up in this 'noir réseau du sort', and feel the tree of Fate twisting its thousand knots through our very skulls. (This more sombre aspect of the world-tree is investigated by him further in *Le Satyre*, II, where Fate, as of old, is found to be woven, but in this instance from the 'funestes rameaux', the serpentine boughs of a cosmic wood, of the 'forêt du sort'. In such cases the tree stands ominously for the irresistible causal chain: 'O nature terrible! ô lien formidable / Du bois.' Cf. the three Norns that water the roots of Yggdrasil and Carlyle's interpretation of this image in *On Heroes*, Lecture I).

These last examples are drawn in the main from poems written in 1854-1855; the image may therefore have been suggested by that of the *Zohar*, in which Hugo was interested at this time. But it was for Hugo a natural step, and consistent with his earlier formed ideas of the tree, to equate it with his vitalistic universe ('La création vit et se multiplie'):

L'homme n'est qu'un témoin frémissant d'épouvante,
Les firmaments sont pleins de la sève vivante
Comme les animaux.
L'arbre prodigieux croise, agrandit, transforme,
Et mêle aux cieus profonds, comme une gerbe énorme,
Ses ténébreux rameaux. (VI,ix)

In certain mythologies (cf. *Bhagavadgîtâ*, XV.1-3), perhaps through contamination by solar and uranian myths, the world-tree is inverted. (This is so with the *Zohar* image). Its roots are in heaven while its branches spread earthwards like the rays of the sun (cf. Dante, *Par.*, XVIII.28-30). In *Choses vues* a chandelier

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suggests to Hugo 'un immense arbre d'or et de flammes renversé qui semblait avoir ses racines dans la voûte. et qui laissait pendre sur la foule son feuillage de clarté et d'étincelles'; and, again, the *Melancholia* of *Les Contemplations* contains the image of '... la racine ardente et pleine d'âmes / De quelque arbre céleste épanoui plus haut' (III.ii). This is a strange coincidence, but of a type not uncommon in Hugo's primitive imagery.

Space allows only one further comment on the image of the tree as it appears in *Les Contemplations*, namely, on the recurrence of the adjective 'profond': 'arbres profonds' (I.ii,xxi;IV.vi;V.xxvi); cf. 'les arbres sont profonds' (II.xxvi); 'vos profondeurs' (III.xxiv); 'la profondeur des bois' (I.xiv); and 'forêts ... profondes' (I.xxviii). The epithet belongs to the earliest and latest of the poems in the volume and is perhaps to be understood at times in its concrete meaning, for the roots of the tree draw life from the secretest depths; at times with the Latin connotations of lofty and boundless, since its branches are co-extensive with the universe; and, finally, as a synthesis of such other mythological associations as we have considered: its trunk holds the deep secrets of life's origin, renewal and ultimate destiny. Hugo's attachment to the 'arbres profonds' betrays the same desire to participate in the life of the tree which Bernardin de Saint-Pierre expressed in the previous century:

Mon âme s'y abandonne; elle se berce avec les feuillages ondo-
yants des arbres; elle s'élève avec leurs cimes vers les cieux; elle
se transporte dans les temps qui les ont vus naître et dans ceux
qui les verront mourir, ils étendent dans l'infini mon existence
circonscrite et fugitive (loc.cit.,p.377).

In an era when the traditional forms of salvation no longer satisfied, the Romantic Hugo reminds us of the Emperor Julian, awed by the Hercynian forest, and yearning to relive an older paganism.

■

‘LE RÊVE DE D’ALEMBERT’ AND ‘DE RERUM NATURA’

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THAT some relationship exists between Diderot's dialogue and the poem of Lucretius has struck most readers of the former work; however neither this question nor the far wider one of Lucretius' rôle in 18th century French thought has ever been satisfactorily examined.¹ Vernière in his critical edition of the *Rêve* (Paris, Didier, 1949) and in his notes to the *Oeuvres philosophiques* (Garnier, 1956) does count Lucretius among the principal sources of the dialogue and points out those passages which are incontrovertibly Lucretian reminiscences. He would seem, however, to give far more importance to Spinoza than to Lucretius, at least among those sources not contemporary with Diderot. (It is, of course, obvious that the greater part of the data on which Diderot bases his materialistic theories are derived from the work of contemporary naturalists and physiologists.) This impression is confirmed in Vernière's monumental *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Révolution* (Paris, PUF, 1954) where the *Rêve de d'Alembert* is seen as a synthesis of 18th century empiricism and Diderot's materialistic interpretation of the first part of the *Ethics*. Yet one may well wonder whether the *Rêve* owes so very much to Spinoza, whether in fact Lucretius' poem not only played a far greater rôle than the *Ethics* in the genesis of the dialogue, but also marked as deeply the vision of things that the reader finally infers from the whole.

That Diderot's knowledge of Spinoza was partial, Vernière has abundantly proved; no one in 18th century France seems to have been acquainted with the fifth part of the *Ethics*. But it may well be that this knowledge was purely second-hand; those passages in the *Rêve* which have reference to Spinozism (God conceived as a 'world soul' and likened to the meninges of the universe, God conceived as being subject to vicissitudes, the possibility of all sorts of prodigies if God were identified with matter), all these derive not from Spinoza himself, but from Bayle's misinterpretations of Spinoza in the *Dictionnaire historique et critique*. Moreover, the article *Spinoziste*, which is a brief statement of Diderot's materialism and wherein prefigures one of the key arguments of the *Rêve*, the development of the egg, owes nothing to Spinoza's writings but

is inspired largely by recent embryological controversies and the memory of *De rerum natura* II 927. The title 'Spinozist' was probably little else but a convenient label that Diderot found useful in designating his monist system; he could hardly have had any sense of discipleship towards Spinoza. On the other hand he was probably quite conscious of having drawn directly upon Lucretius, the more so as his acquaintance with the latter was not only first-hand, but, as will be seen, very fresh in his mind when he came to write the *Rêve*.

Unlike most of the other works which remained unpublished during Diderot's lifetime, the *Rêve de d'Alembert* can be fairly accurately dated from his letters to Sophie Volland in the late summer of 1769. This same correspondence provides some information, admittedly meagre but nevertheless significant, about the genesis of the work. He seems to have first considered imitating the Platonic dialogue, with Classical personages as interlocutors; this conception was rejected, since, as he says, 'la vraisemblance m'aurait renfermé dans les bornes étroites de la philosophie ancienne'.² Whatever the limitations imposed on his subject matter, Diderot's choice was wise, as he was never suited to the neo-classical grand manner and, in any case, by using his contemporaries as interlocutors, came far closer to the spirit of the Platonic dialogue. However, the fact that he proposed originally to cast his work in a classical mould and treat it with high seriousness is interesting. Even more interesting is his choice of personages: namely, Democritus, Leucippus, first holders of the atomic theory, and Hippocrates.³ Did Diderot intend to expound his own materialism in terms of the old atomic theory and support the latter by the evidence of Hippocrates' physiology, just as his own views found support in the theories of Bordeu? This seems highly probable; he may well have considered using the traditional anecdote that Hippocrates was called upon by the Abderites to cure Democritus as a setting for the dialogue. One may well ask, too, whether this desire to compose in the classical manner and to use the old atomic theory as a vehicle for his own materialism was perhaps inspired by Lucretius. Not only was Lucretius the best available source for details of ancient atomism, but it is also virtually certain that Diderot re-read in part or in whole the *De rerum natura* some eighteen months or so before the composition of the *Rêve de d'Alembert*.

The occasion for this was the preparation of a translation of Lucretius' poem by Lagrange (1738-1775), tutor of d'Holbach's children. This appeared in July or early August 1768, in two volumes, with each page of translation facing the original text, and

with a commentary and notes at the end of each volume. It seems to have been accepted as the standard French version of the poem until the early nineteenth century, though its literary merits were never highly valued at any time. The publication seems to have created some stir in literary circles, since it bore the mark of Grandval and was obviously intended as 'philosophic' propaganda. The notes on the text are in fact very tendentious. The rumour seems even to have run that Diderot had a hand in the actual translation; this, however, was corrected by Grimm with his usual acidity in the *Correspondance littéraire* (t. VIII p.152, 15th August 1768):

M. Diderot l'a, à la vérité, revue avec l'auteur avant l'impression, mais s'il avait traduit quelques-uns des beaux morceaux de Lucrèce, j'ose croire que tout lecteur doué d'un peu de goût s'en serait aperçu . . .

It is obvious from this and from some remarks addressed by Diderot himself many years later to Naigeon that Lagrange's scholarship and literary gifts were not greatly respected in his employer's circle and that he was entrusted merely with hack-work, and even then not with full confidence.⁴ But if Diderot did in fact supervise this edition of *De rerum natura*, it is difficult to know what form this supervision could have taken. With his multitudinous interests it is hardly likely that Diderot ever found time for the irksome task of checking the whole version; moreover some six or seven years later he expresses his dissatisfaction with Lagrange's translation and in no way implies he had any hand in it.⁵ Yet he must certainly have followed Lagrange's labours, even if not very closely. Grimm not only talks of Diderot's 'revision', but takes Lagrange roundly to task for not acknowledging Diderot as the author of the suggestion (made by Lagrange in the preface to his edition) that the verses of *Georgics* II 490-2: 'felix qui potuit rerum cognoscere causas . . .' were Virgil's homage to Lucretius.⁶ Perhaps if the hand of Diderot is to be seen anywhere in this edition of Lucretius, it is in the notes and commentary. Here one finds again and again themes which were to be taken up by Diderot a year later in the *Rêve*; in a note to *De rerum natura* III 719 et seq., where Lucretius puts forward his theory of spontaneous generation, the modern evidence of Needham is cited, just as Diderot was to do in the *Rêve*; in notes on II 870-4 and III 94-103, where Aristoxenus' theory of 'harmonia' is defended against the criticism of Lucretius, the concept 'harmonia' is interpreted in much the same terms as Diderot uses in the *Rêve* to put forward his own and Bordeu's theory of 'matière sensible'; Lucretius' views on the origin of

seminal fluid (IV.1037 et seq.) are commended and supported by the authority of Hippocrates and Democritus and were to be followed closely by Diderot in the *Rêve*; finally in the note on VI 30-1, we find Lucretius reproached for introducing the idea of hazard into what should be a purely deterministic system, this in terms reminiscent of the *Rêve*.

As they stand, the notes are surely not the work of the mediocre Lagrange alone, but show the hand of some or all of the 'clan holbachique'. Whether or not Diderot actually helped in their composition, he must almost certainly have been present at discussions on Lagrange's work. It is at the very least a tenable hypothesis that the *De rerum natura* with which he then had the opportunity of renewing acquaintance sowed the seeds in his mind of what was later to become the *Rêve de d'Alembert*, that the Roman poet's passionate exposition of the nature of the universe tempted Diderot to do likewise for his own age. The author of the *Lettre sur les aveugles* and the director of the *Encyclopédie* had long before seen the relevance of physics and physiology, but it was perhaps only in that summer of 1768 that he realized they could inspire the highest poetry. Inevitably what he finally produced differed in form and content from the Latin poem; nevertheless the filiation is there and an examination of it is not unfruitful.

It is easy to see those basic attitudes of Lucretius which would appeal to Diderot. Firstly, the view of the universe as being increate and purposeless, governed by physical law, not divine will. Secondly, the acceptance of sense data as part of the basic stuff of the universe.

Invenies primis ab sensibus esse creatam

Notitiam veri neque sensus posse refelli (IV 478-9).

Thirdly, the belief that all phenomena must ultimately be defined in physical terms.

Ergo corpoream naturam animi esse necesse est (III 175-6)

Fourthly, the conceiving of the Universe, the 'summa summarum' of Lucretius, as eternal only in its totality, its parts, be they worlds, men or animalcules passing continually from birth to decay. These attitudes, especially the last two, provide the dominant themes of the *Rêve*, and whilst Diderot had arrived at these beliefs long before reading Lucretius, it is noteworthy that he supports them with arguments derived directly from Lucretius and in language marked by Lucretian reminiscences.

These arguments and illustrations which he takes from the *De rerum natura* are small in number, but nevertheless significant

in that they bear on what seemed to Diderot the key point of his theory: 'le passage de l'état d'inertie à l'état de sensibilité, et les générations spontanées'.⁷ It is true that Diderot's materialism is not atomic and that his theory of sensation is quite different from that of Lucretius. He postulates as his basic units molecules which have some sort of potential sensitivity; when arranged in certain ways, this sensitivity becomes actual. Lucretius' explanation of sensitivity and conscience by assuming the existence of the very light atoms of 'anima' and 'animus' obviously could not satisfy Diderot and this particular point is severely criticized in Lagrange's notes. However, Diderot's own theory of 'matière sensible' is never clearly elaborated: he speaks at one moment in terms of a molecular universe, at another in terms of a single substance after the fashion of Spinoza: for the most part he is reduced, as Lucretius was 1800 years before him, to asserting that organic matter is generated directly from inorganic matter, supporting this affirmation by pointing out significant phenomena, but making no attempt to explain the actual nature of these phenomena. Moreover it is significant that the three processes on which he bases his preliminary argument in the *Entretien* all resemble those chosen by Lucretius. Thus the process marble-humus-vegetable matter-human flesh corresponds to the process water-pasture-cattle-human flesh in *De rerum natura* II 875-877; the argument based on the mechanical nature of conception — birth — growth — senescence — death — decay echoes *De rerum natura* IV 1040-44 for conception, I 189-92 for organic growth, I 248-9 and II 262-4 for death and decay. Diderot, of course, presents his argument, if not more cogently, at least more vividly, by rejecting the general terms of Lucretius and giving the history of a particular organism called d'Alembert. Finally there is the example of the egg transformed under heat into the chicken; here again we find the calm generalization of Lucretius (II 925-7) replaced in Diderot by the long and impassioned development of the question: 'Voyez-vous cet œuf? C'est avec cela qu'on renverse toutes les écoles de théologie et tous les temples de la terre.' Lucretius was fortunate in having no notion of orthodoxy nor of institutions organised to defend it.

Then there is the appeal of both men to the phenomenon of spontaneous generation of living matter. Now it is obvious that Diderot accepted the occurrence of this phenomenon, not on the authority of Lucretius, but on that of Buffon's and Needham's experiments. For all this, when he comes to expound this question in the dream sequence of d'Alembert beginning: 'Si lorsque Epicure assurait que la terre contenait les germes de tout . . .',

it is not the accounts of Buffon or Needham that he has present in his mind, but Lucretius' magnificent hymn to the generative powers of the earth (V 780-854); that all this is shot through with Lucretian reminiscence is supported by the curious misapplication of the image of the bull ploughing up the earth with its horns, occurring later in book V.⁸ By a trick of memory Diderot has confused this image of bulls in battle with the earlier images of animals being born from the earth.

The parallels in arguments and in imagery discussed above are fairly easily established and can be backed by tangible evidence; but Diderot owes a far more important debt to the Roman, a debt, however, which is less easily defined. One is most conscious of it in those passages of the dream sequences where Diderot evokes the eternal flux of the universe. There seem to be no definite correspondences in language or imagery, although the two visions virtually coincide. What, however, Diderot seems to have derived from Lucretius, as Shelley did a generation or so later, was a realization of the rich poetry of such a vision of the universe, of the exaltation that it could call forth, despite the fact that it makes vain some of the most deep-rooted of human wishes. It is curious that this vision wherein not only the individual is seen as impermanent, but the species, but the earth and heavens themselves, should have the power of provoking exaltation and enthusiasm. As a conquest of human egoism it is admirable and it seems highly probable that Diderot was helped in that conquest by Lucretius, that the passionate eloquence of d'Alembert's dream meditation: 'Tout change, tout passe, il n'y a que le tout qui reste. Le monde commence et finit sans cesse . . .'⁹ or 'Et la vie . . . la vie, une suite d'actions et de réactions . . . Vivant, j'agis et je réagis en molécules . . . Je ne meurs donc point . . . Non, sans doute, je ne meurs point en ce sens, ni moi ni quoi que ce soit . . . Naître, vivre, et passer, c'est changer de formes. Et qu'importe une forme ou une autre . . .'¹⁰ does bear the mark of the Lucretian verses:

Cedit item retro, de terra quod fuit ante,
in terras, et quod missumst ex aetheris oris,
id rursum caeli rellatum templa receptant.
nec sic interemit mors res ut materiai
corpora conficiat, sed coetum dissipat ollis.

(Book II, vv. 999-1003)

or

Cedit enim rerum novitate extrusa vetustas
semper, et ex aliis aliud reparare necessest.

nec quisquam in barathrum nec Tartara deditur atra.
materies opus est ut crescant postera saecula;
quae tamen omnia te vita perfuncta sequentur.
nec minus ergo ante haec quam tu cecidere cadentque.
sic alid ex alio numquam desistet oriri
vitaque mancipio nulli datur, omnibus usu.

(Book III. vv. 964-971)

It is true that the staccato rhythms of Diderot's prose with its brief sentences formed of monosyllables have little resemblance with the measured progress of the Lucretian hexameter; but both styles spring from and are charged with the same enthusiasm, the same wonderment at the boundless and unending play of matter, at its infinite variety and possibilities. It is true that just as so many of Lucretius' arguments did not satisfy Diderot, so to-day Diderot's theories no longer satisfy us; and yet just as Diderot felt the impact of Lucretius' intense conviction and the poetic force of his language, and perhaps because he felt this impact, so to-day Diderot can evoke the enthusiasm of the modern reader even though the latter may not share his naïve trust in the experiments of Needham. Materialism has inspired few poets, and yet perhaps, no less than any other system, it merits the prestige of poetic expression: in this regard it has been amply served by Lucretius and Diderot.

NOTES

¹ The article of C. A. Fusil (*Lucrèce et les philosophes du 18e siècle*, RHLF 1928 p.35) is very disappointing, and the thesis of G. Hocke, *Lukrez in Frankreich von der Renaissance bis der Revolution* (Köln 1935) merely touches on the problem.

² *Lettres à Sophie Volland*, III p.209.

³ *ibidem*.

⁴ *Oeuvres* t. III p.12.

⁵ *Oeuvres* t. III p.479.

⁶ *Correspondance littéraire* t. VIII p.153. Diderot seems to have been very proud of his discovery, though it is hardly likely that he was the first to have noted the reference to Lucretius.

⁷ *Oeuvres philosophiques*, Garnier 1956 p.303.

⁸ *De rerum natura* V 1323-5.

⁹ *Oeuvres philosophiques* p.300.

¹⁰ *ibidem* p.313.

MARIE MAURON AND PROVENCE

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PROVENCE is an 'antique land'. Quite apart from the impressive geological antiquity of the Estérel and of the Corniche des Maures (about 500 million years, immensely older than the Mediterranean as now known), its place even in recorded history goes well back into pre-Christian times. In Ligurian days Marseilles (Massilia) was settled by a Greek merchant community from Asia Minor: it was defended by the ubiquitous Roman legions against the Oxybii (154 B.C.) and the Salluvii (125 B.C.), and Marius' huge slaughter of the Teutones at Aix (Aquae Sextiae) came in 102 B.C. Under the Romans, however, Provence was merely part of Transalpine Gaul, a vast tract covering modern Languedoc, Dauphiny and Savoy, until the military genius of Julius Caesar made the whole of modern France a tributary of the Eternal City. Its main arterial road (N.7), the Via Aurelia, from Aix to Vintimille, is still styled in peasant speech *lou camin aurélian*. Arenas like those of Arles, Fréjus (Forum Julii) and Orange, ruins of aqueducts and temples and even baths, in addition to the rich store of mosaics, amphoras, gravestones and statues offered up by a historic soil to modern archaeologists, all bear testimony to a rich imperial past.

When the Romans had gone, this long coastal way of access to Spain saw itself overrun by fresh invaders: Vandals, Burgundians, Goths and Franks despoiled its ancient heritage, and in the 9th and 10th centuries Mediterranean trade was paralysed by the Saracen pirates ensconced in the Corniche des Maures. When order was restored by the Hohenstaufens, and Provence became part of the Holy Roman Empire, its destinies under various dynasties (especially the house of Barcelona) varied from obscurity to a brilliant civilization. Under the Angevin kings, it was for a time the seat of the Papacy, and its 15th century under King René was, for all its troubled history, an age that held the arts in high honour. Its final destiny was to become incorporated in the domains of the kingdom of France after 1481, and its beautiful language knew an eclipse until the mid-19th century.

Provence has been favoured by nature with clearly drawn frontiers—the Rhone and the Mediterranean in west and south, the huge wall of the Alps in the east, and it is only in the north that the boundary is less defined. Yet even here nature's vest-

ments change with the approach of the south: beech and oak yield place to olive, pine and cypress, and pasture-covered hills are succeeded by outcrops of rock and chalk. Vineyards rise in terraced tiers of red-brown earth, goats and donkeys replace the cows and horses of the north, villages and townships perch on the security of craggy hills, and house-tops level out into the gentle incline of southern roofing. The fresh, vivid green of the north fades into a wind-swept grey-green, river valleys become meandering cascades of rock and pebble, and the sky itself puts on that hard, dry blue that was the rapture of Van Gogh. Where nature is ungente, stunted scrub struggles painfully through a wilderness of rock and gravel called *garrigue*: more often, the *maquis* is clothed with gorse and *cistus* (a glory of colour in May), while rosemary and thyme, lavender and pine perfume the warm air. Old stone farmhouses (*mas*) doze in the southern sunshine, and on the wooded slopes the russet bark of the *pin maritime* and the iron-red nudity of the stripped cork-trees proclaim that this is a land of strong colours.

For all its tradition of pleasance and dalliance, Provence is also a land of strength and wrath, a 'rude pays', in Michelet's phrase. Not only in its configuration—for the wildness of the upland *clues* or ravines, and the titanic disorder of the Verdon gorges, might well be the site of an Armageddon of the gods—but in the daily phenomena of nature. The torrid summer heat, with its month-long droughts and dreaded forest fires, often breaks into violent electric storms that reverberate along the hills, and when the south-easter *does* at length bring rain, it is no gentle shower but a huge downpouring that turns parched river-beds overnight into raging floods. Summer brings, too, the hot breath of the sirocco, while springtime is marred by the long-sustained fury of the mistral—violent, gusty, and capable of making the sunniest Provençal peasant querulous and irritable. It is only in the *calanques* and the sheltered bays along the Estérel and Riviera that life can sprawl torpidly in the Mediterranean sunshine, and dream of *bouillabaisse* or *pissaladiera*.

Provence's link with the far Mediterranean past has been preserved unbroken. The Gothic and feudal disciplines that swept unchallenged through northern Europe were here tempered by existing tradition. The church of Saint-Trophime at Arles or the Cistercian abbey of Le Thoronet are poles removed in spirit from the soaring intensity of Chartres or Rheims, and the Revival of Learning impinged more forcibly on the untutored north than on a province whose coastal highway provided constant contact with the land of the Caesars and its Greco-Roman manuscripts. Pro-

vence had its numerous contacts with the Arab world too—not only with Spain (that meeting-place of Latin and Arab tradition) via the Languedoc plain, but directly with the Saracen buccaneers and with the Moslem defenders of Islam against the Crusaders. Even today, centuries afterwards, observers still note traces of Saracen ancestry in certain racial types of Provence: the ruined castle of La Garde-Freinet, on the Corniche des Maures, was one of their last strongholds. It is not impossible that Provençal courtly poetry found some pabulum in Arab originals, and the place of these 'pagans' in the *Chanson de Roland* and the *Chanson de Guillaume* is all too familiar.

Older than these civilized traditions, however, is the timeless rural tradition of Provence. Maritime Provence, of course, is paying toll to modern industry (including the tourist industry, with its floating population of adipose cosmopolitans), but inland Provence (*Haute Provence*) was always the domain of shepherd and farmer, of herdsman and bee-keeper and *vigneron*. Here among the tumbling hills, where every precious pocket of soil in a rocky wilderness has been terraced by nameless toilers over the centuries into tiny vineyards and cornfields, and olive and lavender subsist on the exposed slopes, nature has not been bountiful. Pasture is scanty enough on the stone-studded plateaux where sheep and goats graze, and in the parched summer months water is a pearl of great price. Sun-scorched in the hot season, wind-frozen in the winter and spring, these tracts have produced a rugged, tenacious peasantry that has to wrest its livelihood by unrelenting toil from an unresponsive land.

The contribution of Provence to French regional literature in the 19th century, with Mistral, Daudet, Paul Arène, Jean Aicard and their contemporaries, is fairly familiar. Among a host of lesser authors, and of writers in Provençal, three writers of this region have distinguished themselves in the last 20-30 years by fresh and original work of local inspiration—Jean Giono, Henri Bosco and Marie Mauron.

Marie Mauron's Provence is the Alpilles country (south of Avignon), whose south-west fringe houses, at Fontvieille, the windmill of Alphonse Daudet's *Lettres de mon moulin*. These dry, rocky hills rise nowhere to a greater height than 1200 feet: near Saint-Rémy there still exist imposing remains of the Roman occupation of Gaul, and a few miles further north lies Maillane, the birthplace of Mistral. From the crags of Les Baux one commands a wide, blue prospect southwards over the Crau and the Camargue to the Mediterranean. These Alpilles, carpeted with sparse pasture, with thyme and lavender, and planted with olives

where the soil is adequate, are a precarious haunt even of wild game; there are few villages or roads, and the hillmen, of necessity, find their economy linked with that of the better endowed plains below them—with the vineyards of the north or the horse- and cattle-breeding of the south. It is a region which springs into rugged life in every novel Marie Maureon has written: her own childhood, as she relates it incidentally in her study of her friend, the peasant-poet Charles Rieu, of Le Paradou, was lived on the northern slopes of the 'Little Alps', and she loves every stone, every twig of them. She was, moreover, a protégée of this poet, and he, years before, of Mistral himself; Provençal values are therefore paramount in her written work.

Her recent animal studies, *La chèvre* (1947), *Le taureau* (1949) and *La transhumance* (1951), identify her even more closely with her pays. With *Le taureau* she is perhaps less successful than, say, Giono: this is a ponderously documented study, the history of the bull in world religions, and its local significance makes up a diverting but slight second part. The goat study, however, is better: essentially a study of females, and by a woman, it evokes a creature more genuine than Daudet's Blanquette, a compound of sunshine and freedom, a product of solitude and drought. For the author the goat is the symbol and incarnation of the southerner, and 'le caractère caprin' is as Mediterranean as the inland sea itself. The endless details of diet, disease, breeding and even Nostradamus subtract nothing from the charm of the book, and the link with the 'hills' country is, naturally, very close. *La transhumance* is a personal adventure of the author, a trek she undertook one summer with four shepherds in driving a flock of 2,000 sheep to mountain pasture in the Alps near Grenoble, and then back to winter quarters in the Crau. As a vivid human document this could hardly be surpassed, and the close, affectionate study of the dumb beasts subjected to the ruthless law of the herd, and of survival, is most moving. All the shepherd's art of healing, the mountain herbs that came before antibiotics, the mysterious instinct of the flock in sensing storm or the turn of summer, the immense fatigue of the return journey, with its hardships and its pathetic casualties, and the joy of home-coming—all these are noted sensitively by a woman with a great capacity for pity. Marie Maureon served a fine apprenticeship as a 'shepherdess of sheep'.

She has elected to write chiefly in the novelette or sketch form already used by her fellow-southerners Paul Arène and Alphonse Daudet—a form which, while it sidesteps the architectural servitude of novel-building, lends itself admirably to the whimsical.

affectionate 'glimpses' of local life which form such a vivid picture-gallery in *Mont-paon* (1937), *Le quartier Mortisson* (1938), *Les rocassiers* (1947) and *A l'ombre soleilleuse* (1954). (Giono likewise used this form in books like *Solitude de la pitié*). The tiny commune of Mont-paon, which has no church, no bell, no parish pump, no post office or postman, no lighting and no railway station (only a stopping-place smothered in rushes), Mont-paon whose 'town clerk' has for years burnt all official communications from the Government, so that the *mairie* is a place of dust and rats and general dilapidation, Mont-paon is a joyous thing as irresistible as Arène's *Canot des six capitaines*, and the pages on the horse census and the tax-gatherer's visit are most infectiously gay. Mortisson (sc. Saint-Rémy), with its Van Gogh associations, provides matter for reflection as well as for laughter: nature is niggardly in these hills, and poaching, theft and even less amiable misdeeds have grown into traditions. It is a tribute to the authoress, however, that she has looked upon such things with wise, understanding eyes, and has avoided the gross touch of Zola and the sentimentality of George Sand. Her peasants take on at times the grave dignity of a Le Nain canvas, yet she can handle as deftly the mendicant rascalities of a Murillo, and discover an equal humanity in both. The solitaires Maria and La Reynaude, the veteran poachers Césaire, La Broque and Le Noir, the 'bad lad' Madran, the postman Brocaillon III, the old shepherd Clarille who lives for his bees and his flute, Siffroy who loves nothing but his vineyard—all encounter Marie Mauron's warm charitableness, and her sense of belonging to their community.

In *Les rocassiers*, dedicated 'à mes amis de la colline', her manner is more Rembrandtesque: these are, many of them, studies in old age, not unkindly observed, in which the years etch their countless wrinkles on life, and the shadows are deep. From the old hermit nicknamed *Le Gendarme* to the world-weary Maria-de-la-joie, from the shepherd Cyprien to the motherless Sister Felicity and even to the dying almond-tree, this book shows the authoress gravely preoccupied with the time-process, above all in two of the most moving chapters, *Le premier*, a wistful retrospect on home and childhood, and *Siffroy*, where the aged vineyard-tender of the previous book, one Christmas day, has the joy of passing on to his grandchild his own hill-lore, and all the toughness and freedom of the Alpilles country. This sense of tradition, of an inheritance passed on from generation to generation, is native to the regional novel, and a reiterated stress in Marie Mauron's work: it is strongest in *L'ombre portée* (1946) and

La maison des passants (1949). A more recent book still, *A l'ombre soleilleuse* (1953), is a blend of sunshine and shadow, with racy dialogue and plenty of episode. One story, *Pierre d'Espère*, repeats, with much better narrative, Daudet's *Arlésienne* theme, and one, *Le pli professionnel*, is a rather Maupassant study of conjugal callousness. The first story in the book, however, *Les Claparèdes continuent*, shows the peasant's tenacious earth-instinct at play, victorious even over the tragedy of a divided home and childlessness, and closely linked with some deep-seated sense of obligation to the ancestral hills.

Of the novels proper, which are also all set in the Alpilles, a recent one, *La maison des passants* (1949), the saga of a peasant family, is the least successful. Its theme is the problem of time and timelessness on the hills, and of the generations that tend them; but its didactic, reflective note, the absence of any main character to sustain the unity of the book, and its lame *dénouement*, seem rather to rob the book of vitality and conviction. An earlier work, *L'ombre portée* (1946), occupied with the same problems, achieves unity with its characterization of a rather feckless, happy-go-lucky hillman who clings staunchly to his birthright of blue sky and sunshine and the freedom of his dry, rocky hills. This is a man who, like his grandfather (*L'ombre*) before him, has 'the hill' in his very blood: fearless, venturesome, reading daily in Nature's book, he 'belongs' properly with the wild combes and the wild game, and leaving domestic cares and parental frets to his toiling wife, prefers to live 'under the wide and starry sky', inheriting the ancient silence of the night and his kinship with the stealthy world of fur and feather. The servitudes of a breadwinner, even the tilling of the soil, are not for him: he is a wild creature nourished on sunshine and honeydew, and when death beckons he simply vanishes, untraced, into his beloved wilderness, while his children, and his children's children, enter upon their heritage of liberty and 'sunburnt mirth', and become, in their turn, incarnations of the Hill.

By far the most powerful evocation, however, is the novel published in 1943, *Le soir finit bien par tomber*—the strange story of a hillman wild by nature and tradition who, under the shock of his wife's infidelity, deliberately isolates himself little by little from all human contacts. The stark simplicity of the story is its strength—that, and the close study of Provençal life in the Alpilles. The stream of time moves on in its unhurried way: the wars of 1914 and 1939 are merely distant echoes that hardly register on a landscape that goes on unheeding with its eternal rhythms of change. Jean le Cat-fert (Wild-cat), having simplified

physical living to barest necessities, lives out timelessly his allotted span, as impassive as the rocks on which he was brought up. The banishment of his fickle wife and her death, years later, the importunities of her vagabond, unsavoury kith and kin, the bereavement of a neighbour, scarcely graze the granite that is the heart of him. His inherited money, useless and unwanted, lies confined under the hearth. Orchards, crops, vineyards he allows nature to reclaim—it leaves him unmoved: both he and they are appointed to go back to wilderness. Hate, love, pity, he has long since ceased to feel. And the craggy solitude that was his self-appointed prison becomes in time his tomb: he dies, the last scion of his race, with no hope, no posterity, no regret, no clinging to life or time. It is a wonderful piece of sustained characterization, in which action hardly exists at all, but the interest is focussed—quite sympathetically, too—on a character who is intrinsically not at all attractive. Yet the rugged force of the man, his dour, silent doggedness, compel respect, and his stature is all the greater for the mean pigmies who flit across the stage of his life. And it is in him that we see, writ large, a Provence that the sentimental Daudet forgot—a land with an iron quality to it, ungentle of aspect, aloof and brooding, a closed book to all but its own children. Catfert is as powerful a creation as Le Roy's *Ennemi de la mort* or Chateaubriant's Aoustin: he and his native hills pulse to the same rhythms, flame into the same wrath, relapse into the same ancient quiet.

The reverse side of the medal, the story of the errant wife, came in 1946—*Lisa de Roquemale*. This is a woman's book, on the 'Scarlet Letter' theme, the tale of a girl all warmth and laughter and sunshine wedded—a hopeless union of fire with rock—to a hard, taciturn peasant. Esteem and loyalty, and the responsibilities of a mother, seem to fulfil her life as a woman, till one day the wild freedom of passion kindles, and reckless in self-giving, she is driven out, a pariah, from her own hearth, to face a life-time of want and loneliness. Woman pays a high price for freedom. Her only solace, in the long, toiling years this side of death, is a memory, and the little hillside glen where happiness, one fugitive moment, once chose to linger. The authoress casts no stone: this is a most human story, and closely linked both with peasant usage and with the march of the seasons across the Provençal landscape. Each of these two books is a study of pride: the one is stronger and more stark, the other redeemed by warmth and feeling.

Marie Mauron has therefore brought rare gifts, and a significant contribution, to the regional novel. Her sense of *pays*, vivid,

affectionate and deep, is a fruit of deliberate choice as well as of inheritance, and her scrutiny of rural life is that of an observer completely integrated with the matter observed. Its speech, habit and husbandry are her own, from earliest childhood: it makes her testimony all the more precious. Folk of peasant stock do not easily lay aside the ploughshare for the pen, and these works of a farm-bred schoolmistress, especially the recollections of early childhood, bring her close to Marguerite Audoux and Raymonde Vincent, to Le Roy and Péguy, and most of all, of course, to Mistral.

LE LANGAGE DE L'ART

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Le langage des livres est le même pour tous.
mais tous ne s'y instruisent pas également . . .

Imitation.

Les choses ont diverses qualités, et l'âme
diverses inclinations; car rien n'est simple
de ce qui s'offre à l'âme et l'âme ne s'offre
jamais simple à aucun sujet. De là vient
qu'on pleure et qu'on rit quelquefois d'une
même chose.

Pascal: *Pensées.*

UNE œuvre d'art d'une originalité réelle demande parfois beaucoup de temps pour être pénétrée. Ce n'est que peu à peu que l'on s'explique (pour autant que l'on s'explique), l'émotion admirative qu'elle éveille; et c'est avec le temps seulement que l'admiration devient plus sereine, le jugement plus équitable. Et si l'œuvre est vaste, il arrive—comme cela est advenu au narrateur de *A la Recherche du Temps Perdu* pour le septuor de Vinteuil,—que les parties de l'œuvre les plus admirées tout d'abord sont comme reléguées dans l'ombre par un chef-d'œuvre nouveau qui éclate soudain, triomphant, au sein de la même œuvre qu'on croyait pourtant bien connaître. Ce qu'on s'expliquait mal au début et qu'on apercevait à peine, s'impose plus tard avec une force crois-

sante à notre attention; et on ne se lasse pas de creuser l'énigme de la beauté nouvelle et les problèmes qu'elle soulève. La 'brume' dans laquelle l'œuvre baignait tout d'abord se lève peu à peu et les formes, d'abord indistinctes, deviennent des 'architectures éblouissantes'.

Une étude attentive, prolongée et collective de l'œuvre d'art permet d'assimiler peu à peu ses beautés, de s'approprier ses vérités plus cachées et la vision nouvelle de l'artiste. La critique, après avoir passé par tous les stades successifs et différents des réactions diverses que l'œuvre nouvelle suscite, atteint enfin 'le repos dans la lumière'.

'Repos' et 'lumière' d'ailleurs relatifs, et qui restent des énigmes. Ce n'est pas nécessairement le dernier venu qui a le plus de lumière ou qui jouit du plus grand 'repos'. Chacun selon sa nature, ses dons, ses lumières et le Moment tout-puissant, atteint le beau qu'il peut. Le poète comme celui qui le reçoit, chacun diversement. Et entre le beau recréé, figuré ou interprété avec plus ou moins de rigueur et le beau ressenti avec plus ou moins de force, il y a l'écart de l'incommensurable.

Il y a le beau particulier auquel s'est arrêté l'artiste et le beau qui ne s'arrête pour ainsi dire plus, qu'on goûte, dont on s'enivre et qu'on consomme en soi. La Forme créée et la magie subie; multiple, multiforme, renaissante, diverse à l'extrême. Il y a l'œuvre de l'écrivain et ce qu'en fait dans le Temps, le lecteur innombrable. Un Paul Valéry ne se lassait pas de le montrer. 'J'ai fait une partition, aimait-il à dire, et je ne puis l'entendre exécutée que par l'âme d'autrui.' Et Charles Péguy: 'Le lecteur achève, accomplit ou exténue le livre.'

Source de découvertes et de merveilles, de mille erreurs aussi (tantôt fécondes, tantôt néfastes), l'œuvre d'art est principe de 'vie' pour les uns, obstacle et pierre d'achoppement pour d'autres. Et cependant il y a rapport et rigueur. L'artiste comme celui qui l'interprète avancent bien et avec une exigence grandissante de rigueur vers quelque chose qu'ils cherchent inlassablement.

L'artiste apporte son corps, recule, place et ôte quelque chose, se comporte de tout son être comme son œil, et devient tout entier un organe qui s'accommode, se déforme, cherche le point, le point unique qui appartient virtuellement à l'œuvre profondément cherchée—qui n'est pas toujours celle que l'on cherche.¹

Si l'artiste ne peut pas toujours dire au juste ce qu'il cherche, ni comment il le cherche, ce qu'il 'trouve' enfin et qu'il incarne dans son œuvre n'est pas non plus de nature rigoureusement

vérifiable, strictement probant, s'imposant à tous avec la même évidence. Plus ce que le poète trouve est précieux et beau, plus c'est intérieur et secret, plus aussi c'est vulnérable et difficile à 'entendre': le profond faisant appel au profond, le pur au pur, le rare au rare. Le rare étant non le plus extraordinaire et 'recherché', mais le plus profondément cherché.

Et le lecteur ému par le beau qu'il n'avait pas créé mais qu'il croit reconnaître ou, au contraire, blessé par ce qu'il ne reconnaît que très partiellement (ce qui l'irrite d'autant plus), est incité à son tour à chercher. Le beau imprime un mouvement, incite un 'commentaire' plus ou moins vivant et le beau interprété appelle une autre interprétation et plus elle est féconde plus elle en féconde d'autres qui la nient souvent (si elles ne la renient pas) et la dépassent ou ne la dépassent pas. Les esprits se nourrissant d'esprits, chaque esprit selon sa nature, ses forces et ses faiblesses cachées, la nature de ses recherches et le mystère de son choix, assimile, s'ajuste et s'achemine vers le destin de sa Forme.

Rien n'est parfois plus instructif et émouvant que de suivre le cheminement tantôt lumineux, tantôt obscur qui mène d'un esprit à un autre, d'une œuvre à une autre, d'une originalité foncière à une autre qui ne l'est pas moins, qui lui est parfois le plus contraire mais dont elle s'était nourrie. Tel Pascal venant après Montaigne. 'L'homme de génie est celui qui m'en donne' disait Valéry. C'est ainsi que Paul Valéry lui-même voit en Mallarmé au moment même où il l'aime le plus, admire le plus et comprend le mieux, 'la seule tête—hors de prix! —à couper pour décapiter toute Rome'. Du moins il le croyait.

Quand on tient compte du passé et des découvertes d'autrui, ceux qui 'pleurent' et ceux qui 'rient' se corrigent les uns les autres. (Ce qui ne veut pas dire qu'ils se neutralisent. Ils se renforcent au contraire mutuellement, s'ils ne se 'durcissent' pas.) Le grand écrivain cherche plus loin ou 'ailleurs' pour se mieux trouver; continuant ou amorçant une 'tradition' qui n'est strictement ni aussi ancienne ni aussi nouvelle que l'on croit habituellement ou qui est aussi ancienne et aussi nouvelle que l'on voudra. Car on ne s'inscrit pas dans la lignée d'une grande tradition en refaisant, fût-ce aussi bien, ce qui a été déjà fait, mais en s'inspirant de ce qui faisait la grandeur de cette tradition, en créant des œuvres aussi grandes et donc tout autres. Et le critique, quelle que soit sa tendance ou son 'école', s'il est vraiment perspicace et créateur, pénètre plus avant dans l'œuvre de l'artiste qu'il apprend à mieux apprécier, créant avec sa manière de voir personnelle, comme un instrument nouveau pour déceler les valeurs nouvelles dans les œuvres aussi bien anciennes que modernes.

Ceux qui 'pleurent' obligent ceux qui 'rient' à donner des raisons toujours meilleures de leur joie, une explication toujours plus précise de leur admiration, une mesure de plus en plus exacte de leurs appréciations, de leurs idées. Et ceux qui 'pleurent' sont obligés à mieux justifier leurs dégoûts. Les uns ne cesseront d'inciter les autres à creuser toujours plus avant.

En effet, 'rien n'est simple de ce qui s'offre à l'âme et l'âme ne s'offre jamais simple à aucun sujet'. Une grande œuvre d'art qui repose sur des 'figures peu familières', et révèle un univers encore inconnu, soulèvera toujours des jugements les plus différents et les plus contradictoires. De cet amas d'idées et de jugements divers, divergents, quelque vérité se dégage cependant à la fin.

Une idée forte communique un peu de sa force au contradicteur. Participant à la valeur universelle des esprits elle s'insère, se greffe en l'esprit de celui qu'elle réfute, au milieu d'idées adjacentes, à l'aide desquelles, reprenant quelque avantage, il la complète, la rectifie; si bien que la sentence finale est en quelque sorte l'œuvre de deux personnes qui discutaient. C'est aux idées qui ne sont pas à proprement parler des idées, aux idées qui ne tenant à rien ne trouvent aucun point d'appui, aucun rameau fraternel dans l'esprit de l'adversaire, que celui-ci aux prises avec le vide pur, ne trouve rien à répondre.²

Des idées différentes et des jugements opposés (qui s'affrontent aussi dans l'esprit d'un seul individu) quelque lumière jaillit à la longue. L'effort collectif se résout enfin en une synthèse plus profonde, d'une logique moins formelle, d'une unité moins uniforme. Une sorte de trait d'union s'opère et une interprétation plus vivante, plus réelle, plus nuancée et plus juste en résulte. On marque à la longue un certain progrès dans la compréhension des grandes œuvres originales difficiles d'abord à apprécier. Un temps vient où certaines vérités concernant l'œuvre ne sont plus à découvrir; la redécouverte de ces vérités n'est plus à faire que par les lecteurs individuels, pour leur joie propre et leur profit personnel. Pour la critique ce seront des vérités acquises. La critique n'est donc pas une science vaine, mais c'est un art difficile.

Connaissance d'autant moins vaine qu'elle pousse plus avant notre compréhension de grandes œuvres, partant notre compréhension de l'homme, de la vie. Art difficile aussi et qu'il importe cependant par-dessus tout d'apprendre. Il s'agit en effet de bien 'lire'; d'assimiler ce que l'œuvre a de beau, de nourricier; discerner le bon fruit des épines et des ronces. Car si le génie et le talent (qu'il s'agit avant tout dans une œuvre d'art de reconnaître

et d'apprécier) sont des dons entre tous admirables, tous n'en usent pas également, ni toujours de la même manière.

Un chef-d'œuvre, nous dit Marcel Proust, moins décevant que la vie ne commence pas par nous donner ce qu'il a de meilleur. Hélas, ce qu'il y a dans une œuvre d'art de moins beau n'apparaît non plus de premier abord. Avec le temps certaines faiblesses d'abord cachées, deviennent elles aussi plus apparentes et les limites de l'œuvre plus accusées. Fascinantes mixtures, les œuvres d'art comme le cœur de l'homme, sont difficiles à sonder.

A la vérité, le meilleur comme le pire dans l'art comme dans la vie, n'apparaît pleinement qu' 'à la fin'.

Certes, le médecin ne nous guérira pas, comme nous le dit Pascal, car nous mourrons à la fin. Ce n'est pas au critique qu'appartiendra jamais le discernement sans appel et le jugement dernier. Et ce n'est pas le grand Ecrivain, le grand Artiste, le grand Poète—si grand, si génial fût-il—qui a les paroles de la vie éternelle.

Mais aussi n'est-ce point de cela qu'il s'agit. Ce n'est pas l'oracle du poète ou le verdict du critique sur le poète qui importent. Que nous fait un verdict, fût-il juste, s'il n'est pas justifié, s'il ne se justifie pas? Ce n'est pas de porter un 'jugement' qu'il s'agit, mais de faire preuve de jugement et d'apprendre à mieux juger : à mieux 'voir', à mieux 'lire' en nous-mêmes.

Et quoique les grands écrivains nous enrichissent toujours de quelque manière, et que chacun puisse à sa manière, nous instruire, édifier même, ce n'est pas pour notre édification spirituelle qu'ils déploient leur génie, exercent leur talent. N'est-ce pas précisément quand ils prétendent nous édifier ou quand ils se prennent pour des prophètes, que les grands écrivains causent souvent le plus grand scandale?

Et pourtant 'prophètes' de quelque manière ils le sont tous, mais à leur insu et pour ceux seulement qui savent le lire et pour autant qu'ils savent le lire.

C'est au lecteur en effet de reconnaître dans une œuvre d'art le beau; d'y 'lire' les divers signes, discerner ce qu'ils manifestent et ce qu'ils présagent. Au lecteur d'interroger l'œuvre, de chercher en lisant et de 'répondre' comme il peut. Chaque lecteur, pour son propre compte, n'est-il pas seul juge de ce qu'il lit? C'est en nous que nous 'lisons' les autres; c'est ainsi que nos jugements nous jugent. Ce n'est pas l'artiste seulement qui doit exercer sans cesse en lui-même, celui qui choisit; le lecteur lui aussi exerce à tout moment son discernement et doit prendre garde à la manière dont il lit. Il n'achève pas seulement, accomplit ou exténue le livre, comme disait Péguy, il peut encore en racheter les faiblesses

et les erreurs. Mais ce qui dans l'œuvre d'art est *rachat* comme le rachat de l'œuvre d'art par le lecteur est peut-être justement ce qui 'l'accomplit'.

. . . J'avais une pitié infinie, écrit Proust dans *le Temps Retrouvé*, même d'êtres moins chers, même d'indifférents et de tant de destinées dont ma pensée en essayant de les comprendre avait en somme, utilisé la souffrance, ou même seulement les ridicules. Tous ces êtres, qui m'avaient révélé des vérités et qui n'étaient plus, m'apparaissaient comme ayant vécu une vie qui n'avait profité qu'à moi, et comme s'ils étaient morts pour moi. (*Le Temps Retrouvé II* p. 52.)

N'est-ce pas ainsi que le lecteur à son tour devrait lire les œuvres de grands artistes pour les bien lire?

Il y en a très peu qui puissent dire comme Charles Péguy qu'ils ne travaillent pas dans le péché. La triste science du monde est celle qu'ils connaissent le mieux; c'est sur les faiblesses de la nature humaine surtout qu'ils ont beaucoup à nous apprendre. Romanciers, artistes et poètes, explorent 'une variété de funèbres chemins'³ plutôt que le sentier étroit qui mène à la Vie.

Ce ne sont un peu partout que Fleurs du Mal. Comment en tirer le Bien?

De cette 'terre trouble . . . et mêlée à l'algue'⁴ le Poète réussit cependant à extraire le beau. Alchimiste de la douleur et ascète de la Forme, d'une réalité souvent triste, erronée, affluant 'comme chose déçue et bue amèrement', il en dégage par de profondes et savantes transmutations, quelques précieuses essences. Dès lors comment ne pas y trouver notre bien?

Un bien divers, varié comme la vie, et comme les multiples œuvres d'art, toujours surprenant et nouveau. Un 'bien' reconnu dans un beau cependant toujours personnel, imprévu, imprévisible; 'nouveau' parce que saisissant, et poétique parce que 'retrouvé'; éminemment significatif, communiquant on ne sait quelle vérité profonde, pressentie; à la fois intime et secrète. Ce 'bien' surprenant merveilleusement reconnu; retrouvé et mystérieux pourtant, qui n'est immédiatement perçu que comme un 'beau' qui émeut, est-il de nature à pouvoir nous tromper sur le vrai bien?

Le Ciel a-t-il formé cet
amas de merveilles

Pour la demeure d'un serpent?⁵

Riches de significations et de beautés diverses (souvent diversement interprétées), pleines de prestiges (qu'on ne finit pas d'ex-

plier) les grandes œuvres d'art nous proposent de fascinantes énigmes à déchiffrer.

Si le don d'expression est si précieux, si le génie, comme le dit Proust, consiste 'dans le pouvoir réfléchissant et non dans la qualité intrinsèque du spectacle reflété'⁶ n'est-ce pas surtout parce que le 'miroir de vie' que l'artiste offre enferme une multitude de significations diverses qu'il ne discerne pas toutes lui-même mais que son art implique? Essentiellement révélateur, son art manifeste non seulement ce qu'il avait exprimé avec une pleine conscience, mais aussi ce qui va au delà de ce qu'il voyait, au delà de ce qu'il pouvait pressentir. Des 'ombres et des figures' s'y inscrivent à son insu qui demandent à leur tour à être interprétés. C'est là que se cache le plus beau.

On discerne d'abord ce que le génie d'un grand écrivain a manifesté assez clairement dans son œuvre, puis ce qu'il ne pouvait s'empêcher d'y révéler plus obscurément. Quand il nous a montré ce qu'il 'voyait' (et ce que nous n'avons pas su voir avant lui), son œuvre sert encore comme une illustration magnifique de ce qu'il ignorait. Et ce qu'il ignore n'est pas moins révélateur.

Chaque homme sait, nous dit Paul Valéry, une quantité prodigieuse de choses qu'il ignore qu'il sait. Savoir tout ce que nous savons? Cette simple recherche épuise la philosophie.⁷

L'homme sait ce qu'il fait—dans la mesure très étroite où il peut constater que ce qu'il a fait a réalisé ou non ce qu'il a voulu faire, mais ne sait ni comment il a fait ce qu'il a fait, ni ce qu'a pu ou pourra faire ce qu'il a fait.⁸

En effet. Un poète, tel Paul Valéry lui-même, peut être un 'dur miroir' qui 'rejette la lumière', mais miroir qu'il est, il la reflète pourtant.

Certes, 'rendre la lumière', comme nous le dit encore Paul Valéry, 'suppose d'ombre une morne moitié'.⁹ Et il ne faut pas l'oublier, sous peine de trouver trompeuses ses lumières mêmes, toujours traversées d'ombres plus ou moins opaques. Mais lumières et ombres instruisent également celui qui sait les interroger.

Dans toute grande œuvre d'art littéraire, on croit discerner parfois non seulement ce que le grand écrivain aimait le plus et ce qui le faisait le plus souffrir; son drame intime et son vœu secret, mais aussi, 'à la profondeur d'un trésor',¹⁰ ce 'moi inqualifiable' toujours semblable à lui-même qui trace sans cesse la physionomie infiniment révélatrice, jamais achevée et énigmatique de l'artiste, pressé à se rapprocher sans cesse de son énigme, de sa 'simplicité dernière'. Inconsciemment accordés à leur 'patrie inconnue, oubliée d'eux-mêmes'¹¹ les grands écrivains dans leurs 'chants' singuliers et mono-

tones semblent montrer que 'l'œuvre de la loi est écrite dans leurs cœurs, leur conscience en rendant témoignage, et leurs pensées s'accusant ou se défendant tour à tour'.¹²

On dirait que la sévère et mystérieuse loi du Beau a des accords profonds et obscurs avec la loi même qui les fonde, les constitue et par laquelle, comme tous les hommes, ils vivent. C'est ainsi que les grands artistes (ceux 'qui vivent sous la loi' et ceux qui l'ignorent) 'témoignent' malgré eux et ne cessent de témoigner. Témoignages les plus divers et souvent involontaires qu'il faut savoir déceler; 'messages' souvent très obscurs et très différents de ceux que l'artiste croyait apporter. Et ce sont précisément les témoignages involontaires, profondément ignorés de l'artiste lui-même, mais qu'il ne peut ne pas manifester dans son œuvre, pas plus qu'il ne peut s'empêcher de respirer, qui sont les plus précieux: les plus purs, les plus révélateurs, les plus essentiellement 'artistiques' et qu'aucun jugement critique n'épuise.

La différence apparente, parfois extrême, qu'on constate entre certains esprits, ne vient-elle pas souvent de ce que les uns ne font surtout qu'énoncer 'la loi', alors que les autres reflètent surtout la réalité intérieure? Et ce qui importe le plus précisément n'est-ce pas la mesure, dans laquelle 'l'œuvre de la loi est écrite dans leurs cœurs'?

La manière d'être est autrement précieuse, autrement révélatrice que ce qu'on dit. Ce qu'on dit peut être répété, est répété, ne signifie souvent que ce qu' 'on dit'; appartient à n'importe qui; ne manifeste 'personne'. Alors que 'la manière' qui nous fascine, plonge ses racines dans le mystère même de l'être 'unique au monde' et universel, et fait toute la valeur de l'œuvre d'art.

Et même en tenant compte de cette originalité acquise . . . , de cette parenté que les musicographes pourraient trouver entre eux, c'est bien un accent unique auquel s'élèvent, auquel reviennent malgré eux ces grands chanteurs que sont les musiciens originaux, et qui est une preuve de l'existence irréductiblement individuelle de l'âme. Que Vinteuil essayât de faire plus solennel, plus grand, ou de faire plus vif et plus gai, de faire ce qu'il apercevait se reflétant en beau dans l'esprit du public, Vinteuil, malgré lui, submergeait tout cela sous une lame de fond qui rend son chant éternel et aussitôt reconnu. Ce chant différent de celui des autres, semblable à tous les siens, où Vinteuil l'avait-il appris, entendu? Chaque artiste semble ainsi comme le citoyen d'une patrie inconnue, oubliée de lui-même, différente de celle d'où viendra, appareillant pour la terre, un autre grand artiste.¹³

La différence réelle (qui mérite surtout d'être profondément

étudiée) est dans cette 'lame de fond' qui submerge tout et rend le chant du poète 'différent de celui des autres, semblable à tous les siens'. Ce 'chant singulier et monotone' révèle non seulement le mystère du choix effectué à tout moment par le poète, mais la profondeur réellement atteinte d'une préférence obscure à lui-même et qui donne à son œuvre son inimitable saveur. 'Saveur inimitable', car elle ne peut être imitée. C'est dans ce qu'elle a précisément de strictement inimitable qu'elle est essentiellement œuvre d'art.¹⁴

Il importe donc relativement peu de savoir si ceci ou cela fut déjà dit, puisque de toute façon, tout et pour chacun, reste à retrouver, à redécouvrir, à vivre intimement. Et quand même tout serait dit que tout restera à vivre, à accomplir et à 'confesser de bouche' 'selon notre patrie'. C'est dans cet intimement vécu et artistiquement accompli : dans la manifestation de 'cet ineffable qui différencie qualitativement ce que chacun a senti', que gît l'originalité véritable. Le Beau, même avec une majuscule et révélé une fois pour toutes, restera éternellement à reconnaître, dans une joie toujours neuve, dans une surprise infinie de l'essentiellement Nouveau dans l'Ancien déjà énoncé.

Mais pourquoi proclamer que dans une œuvre d'art, il importe relativement peu ce que l'artiste dit et que tout est dans la manière dont il le dit ? Ce que l'artiste dit n'importe-t-il pas au contraire beaucoup pour l'artiste comme pour celui qui l'écoute et d'autant plus qu'il le dit avec 'art' ; un pouvoir suggestif infiniment accru ? Et n'est-ce pas dans la mesure même où l'artiste est artiste qu'il est impossible de séparer ce qu'il dit de son art ? Comment en effet séparer ce qu'il dit de l'art avec lequel il le dit quand c'est son art même qui parle ? Quand son art seul suggère ce qui ne peut aucunement être dit linéairement et a besoin pour respirer, pour vivre, de l'espace poétique ?

Et quand effectivement la magie de la poésie se déclare, chaque mot 'se sent un poids nouveau qui vers l'azur délire'. Les mots si bien connus pris un à un, dans le concert de mots, imposé par le poète et qui s'impose, les mots acquièrent comme une valeur nouvelle. Leur pouvoir suggestif n'est plus seulement accru (fût-ce 'infiniment'), il est tout autre, il devient inouï.

Quand :

. . . Le fou, des cirques purs descend ;
Il change le mont chauve en auguste trophée
D'où s'exhale d'un dieu l'acte retentissant.
Si le dieu chante, il rompt le site tout-puissant ;
Le soleil voit l'horreur du mouvement des pierres ;
Une plainte inouïe appelle éblouissants
Les hauts murs d'or harmonieux d'un sanctuaire.

Le Langage de l'Art

Il chante, assis au bord du ciel splendide. Orphée!
Le roc marche, et trébuche; et chaque pierre fée
Se sent un poids nouveau qui vers l'azur délire.¹⁵

Si dans ce qu'il dit (séparable de son art ou brutalement séparé) le grand poète (dépouillé de sa poésie) 'se trompe' souvent et 'le soleil voit l'horreur du mouvement des pierres', dans sa 'manière' et ce qui est plus essentiellement son chant, il fait éclater souvent la beauté de la loi qui l'habite.

Vrai, 'la beauté de la loi' fait mieux éclater aussi la faiblesse de l'homme et son injustice. Et ce n'est pas toujours à la manière glorieuse des poètes que les poètes parlent. Il leur arrive bien de se tromper tout bonnement, et peut-être même de se servir de leur art pour tromper, et d'errer de bien des manières. On le sait. L'homme peut être assez vil, sa vie—l'histoire d'une Erreur, sa pensée—vaine, son œuvre même une manifestation surtout de son mal. Mais confesseur de l'humain et témoin du beau, l'artiste dans son œuvre en tant que son génie s'y manifeste, est un 'miroir de vie' et un 'livre de saintes instructions' tout de vie pénétré pour celui qui sait le lire.

Savoir 'lire' . . . Tout est là.

Mais où est ce lecteur éclairé qui 'lit' tout dans ce qu'il lit et que tout éclaire? Le mieux instruit et le plus dépouillé, le plus nu, le plus ouvert. Prudent comme un serpent et simple comme une colombe. Le lecteur qui accueille avec une ferveur nouvelle le beau (toujours inconnu) et rachète le mal (toujours présent) que le beau n'a pas résorbé?

NOTES

¹ Paul Valéry: *Mauvaises Pensées et autres*, p.119-20.

² Marcel Proust: *A l'Ombre des jeunes filles en fleurs*, I. p.124.

³ Paul Valéry: *La Jeune Parque*.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Vers de Pierre Corneille que Paul Valéry a mis en exergue de sa *Jeune Parque*.

⁶ Marcel Proust.

⁷ Paul Valéry: *Mauvaises Pensées et Autres*, p.113.

⁸ Ibid, p.141.

⁹ Paul Valéry: *Le Cimetière Marin*.

¹⁰ Paul Valéry.

¹¹ Marcel Proust.

¹² Romains 2, 15-16.

¹³ Marcel Proust: *La Prisonnière* p.73-74.

¹⁴ 'Ce qui est en moi inimitable, devait dire Valéry, l'est d'abord à moi-même.'

¹⁵ Paul Valéry. Orphée, *Poésies*, p.13-14.

SOME FEMINIST VIEWS IN FRANCE IN THE SEVENTEENTH CENTURY

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IN a century not lacking in distinguished women, one who is notable for her strongly feminist views is Madeleine de Scudéry. It is now the custom—and indeed it became so towards the end of her own long lifetime—to decry her vast, rambling, episodic novels, *Le Grand Cyrus* and *Clélie*, and to dismiss them as one of the curiosities of the XVIIth century. Yet in their pages are to be found many penetrating comments on the life of her own day, and in particular on the position of women, for Madeleine de Scudéry, as well as being a prolific scribbler, was one of the most independent thinkers of her time, and she was in no two minds about women's rights, especially their right to a liberal education.

A woman's education in the XVIIth century was usually extremely limited. Provided she had learned all the graces of society and could speak correctly, it was not considered in the least important that she should also be able to write or spell correctly. Against this state of affairs Madeleine de Scudéry protests vigorously.

Y a-t-il rien de plus bizarre que de voir comment on agit pour l'ordinaire en l'éducation des femmes? On ne veut pas qu'elles soient coquettes ni galantes, et on leur permet pourtant d'apprendre soigneusement tout ce qui est propre à la galanterie, sans leur permettre de savoir rien qui puisse fortifier leur vertu ni occuper leur esprit . . . Et ce qu'il y a de rare est qu'une femme qui ne peut danser avec bienséance que cinq ou six ans de sa vie, en emploie dix ou douze à apprendre continuellement ce qu'elle ne doit faire que cinq ou six; et cette même personne qui est obligée d'avoir du jugement jusques à son dernier soupir, on ne lui apprend rien du tout qui puisse ni la faire parler plus agréablement, ni la faire agir avec plus de conduite; et vu la manière dont il y a des dames qui passent leur vie, on dirait qu'on leur a défendu d'avoir de la raison et du bon sens, et qu'elles ne sont au monde que pour dormir, pour être belles, pour ne rien faire, et pour ne dire que des sottises . . . Mais ce que je pose pour fondement est qu'encore que je voulusse que les femmes sussent plus de choses qu'elles n'en savent pour l'ordinaire, je ne veux pourtant jamais qu'elles agissent ni qu'elles par-

Some Feminist Views in France in the XVIIth Century

lent en savantes. Je veux donc bien qu'on puisse dire d'une personne de mon sexe qu'elle sait cent choses dont elle ne se vante pas, qu'elle a l'esprit fort éclairé, qu'elle connaît finement les beaux ouvrages, qu'elle parle bien, qu'elle écrit bien, qu'elle sait le monde; mais je ne veux pas qu'on puisse dire d'elle 'C'est une femme savante' car ces deux caractères sont si différents qu'ils ne se ressemblent point.¹

Madeleine de Scudéry was, of course, a confirmed spinster, and her views on marriage are widely known. The following conversation, from *Le Grand Cyrus*, embodies them:

Il faut sans doute, lui dit-il, que vous ne regardiez pas le mariage comme un bien. -Il est vrai, répondit Sapho, que je le regarde comme un long esclavage. -Vous regardez donc tous les hommes comme des tyrans? -Je les regarde du moins comme le pouvant devenir.²

She was not, however, the only woman of her day to protest against the 'tyranny' of marriage. The subject of the rights of women, and particularly their status in marriage, appears to have been one which was widely discussed in the *ruelles* which flourished in the middle of the century. It is to the abbé Michel de Pure that we owe a record of some of the conversations which took place in them—conversations which contained some remarkable views on women's place in society, with some proposals which might still be considered advanced in the XXth century, and were altogether startling in the XVIIth.

Michel de Pure, with other and better-known authors, was an assiduous frequenter of the *ruelles* of Paris, and he recorded some of the conversations he heard there in *La Précieuse ou le Mystere des Ruelles* (in four parts, Paris, 1656-1658.) The title is misleading, in that the term 'précieuse' has become derogatory, especially since Molière's attack, but this was not always so, and the group of women represented in this work are by no means the 'précieuses ridicules' of the comedy. Rather, de Pure's book was intended to be topical, since public interest in the précieuses was roused at this time and there was much curiosity about them. Although it is true that the author has a little fun at their expense, especially over their militant feminism, it is clear that he was interested by their conversations, and impressed by some of their views.

The speakers appear in his work under pseudonyms, though one of the most eloquent, Eulalie, is identified by Emile Magne in his edition of *La Précieuse* as Madame de la Suze. The men who frequented this particular circle are more easily identified—Géname

is a transparent anagram for Ménage. Sarasin appears as Niassare. Chapelain as Parthénoïde (an allusion to *La Pucelle*), and de Pure himself as Philonime. It is hardly surprising that he allows the women to remain discreetly anonymous, in view of some of the proposals put forward by them in the course of the discussions he records.

The founder and moving spirit of these regular gatherings appears under the name of Didascalie. She is an ardent feminist. The portrait is not unmixed with irony, but on the whole the abbé de Pure seems sympathetic towards Didascalie's claims to a woman's right to an intellectual life of her own. She is by no means one of those learned women whose affected pedantry earned them Molière's ridicule. On the contrary she eschews what she calls 'le barbare et pedantesque sçavoir'; but she has no time for the usual topics of conversation among empty-headed fashionable women:

Je trouvoy que partout où j'allois, je ne trouvois de conversation que sur le colet, que sur la coiffure, que sur la taille, et qu'on ne parloit jamais que des mesmes choses, à moins que quelque bizarre événement ne détournast la matiere.

Therefore she determines to seek more congenial society.

C'est ce qui m'obligea de faire, des-jà, provision de quelques amies avec lesquelles j'établis une espece de société et de conversation, douce et agreable, qui pust plaire aux esprits élevez, sans rebuter les esprits foibles.³

All manner of subjects were discussed at these gatherings, but the views expressed on marriage are among the most interesting from the feminist point of view. Didascalie and her friends were not, however, the first women of their time to rebel. Already in the latter years of the XVIth century a mother and daughter at Poitiers, Madeleine and Catherine des Roches, had proclaimed the same views. Their salon, frequented by many of the men of letters of the day, flourished from about 1570 till 1587, when both mother and daughter died of the plague. Outspoken indeed for those days was the complaint that

Les hommes ont toute l'autorité
Contre raison, et contre l'équité.

and again:

Noz parens ont de louïables coustumes,
Pour nous tollir l'usage de raison,
De nous tenir closes dans la maison
Et nous donner le fuzeau pour la plume . . .⁴

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Thus, some seventy years before the hey-day of the *ruelles*, Madeleine des Roches began the campaign for intellectual freedom for women. By the mid-seventeenth century, however, she and her daughter were forgotten, and the ground that they had prepared had to be turned afresh.

Not surprisingly, it is Eulalie⁵ who puts most forcefully the case of the young woman forced into a marriage against her will in order to serve family interests.

Je fus une innocente victime sacrifiée à des motifs inconnus, et à des obscurs interests de maison, mais sacrifiée comme une esclave liée, garottée, sans avoir la liberté de pousser des soupirs, de dire mes desirs, d'agir par choix. On se prévaut de ma jeunesse et de mon obeissance, et on m'enterre, ou plutost on m'ensevelit toute vive dans le lit du fils d'Evandre.⁶

These young women were not content, however, merely to state such grievances; they also discussed, at very great length, possible remedies. Curious indeed were some of the questions discussed, and even more curious were some of the solutions which they suggested, but in other cases they evolved theories well in advance of their own time.

One of the most interesting of these numerous conversations is the one in which Didascalie and her friends propose and discuss various alternatives to marriage, or ways of modifying it so as to give greater freedom to the wife.⁷ The suggestion of the first speaker, Melanire, is that marriage should be undertaken on a twelve monthly basis, to be renewed or dissolved at will at the end of each year.

Quand apres un an on auroit trouvé dans la possession ce que l'espoir et le desir auroient pû promettre, on renouëroit pour une annee suivante; on feroit un nouveau bail; on se feroit tout de nouveau l'amour; et par de nouveaux soins on tacheroit de meriter la continuation des mesmes faveurs; ou quand l'attente auroit esté deceue par l'erreur des sens, par le desordre de la satieté, par la bizarrerie du goust, l'année estant expirée il n'y auroit point de contrainte, chacun rendroit la foy à son compagnon, et reprenant sa liberté chercheroit a l'engager à quelqu'endroit plus agreable.⁸

If there are any children of the marriage, and the parents agree to separate, the children should continue to be their joint responsibility, but should not stand in the way of their forming new attachments.

Next Sophronisbe takes the floor. She begins by comparing

marriage, from the wife's point of view, to a type of prison punishment where a recalcitrant prisoner was placed in a hole called *la mal-aise*, so shaped that he could neither stand upright, nor sit down, nor even crouch down. Similarly, she declares, a wife is constrained on all sides, and if the marriage is destined to last all her life, there is no hope of any improvement in her lot. Sophronisbe therefore advocates experimental marriage, to be entered into without ceremony, and in the knowledge that the two partners will be free to separate as soon as one tires of it. She makes the point that the very insecurity of this arrangement would prevent staleness and boredom.

Après ces douces recompenses des flâmes mutuelles, on cultiveroit ces ferveurs de mesme façon que l'on auroit fait les desirs, et la crainte de les perdre en conserveroit parmy les libertez le respect et les soins que la seureté et l'impossibilité de la division aneantit dès le second pas, et dès le second jour de mariage.

At the first sign of cooling ardour on the part of one of them, the other would be free to withdraw, and the 'marriage' would be terminated. This, Sophronisbe considers, is the only civilized and dignified solution; for what, she asks, could be more humiliating and distressing than to be tied for life to a partner who has become indifferent? She drives her point home with a striking, if rather macabre, comparison:

Je considere le mariage comme cet homme qu'on a autrefois exposé à la Foire qui portoit un autre corps attaché au sien par une espece de chaisne naturelle, mais prodigieuse; ce corps qui n'estoit qu'à demy n'eust pas toute la durée de l'autre qui estoit plus parfait; Il mourut et se corrompit, et l'autre se trouva obligé d'en porter encor la corruption, l'odeur, et le reste de ses membres pourris. Je considere, dis-je, le mariage de la mesme sorte. Il n'y a jamais tant d'égalité entre les parties qu'il n'y ait quelque alteration plus subite et plus prompte dans l'affection de l'un que l'autre; est-il raisonnable que celle qui vit, ait éternellement devant les yeux celle qui est morte, et soit obligée de bruler parmy les glaces et les froideurs mortelles de ce corps auquel elle est jointe? Il faut en revenir à mon remede, laisser commencer le plus inconstant et le moins amoureux, et suivre avec diligence et avec esprit l'exemple qu'il nous donne, régler le mariage comme une société arbitraire, ou l'on ne fait point de vœu, et d'ou l'on peut sortir quand bon il semble.⁹

Eulalie raises a practical objection to this system: no woman, she declares, would care to break off a marriage if it were tanta-

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mount to a public confession that her husband no longer cared for her. Sophronisbe however has an answer ready: it is all a question of custom. She predicts—and in this she proves a good prophet—that things which are considered shocking in her own day will cease to shock future centuries:

Mais cette peine que fait naistre le temps dans lequel nous vivons, et la loy dont nos esprits sont prevenus n'auroit point de lieu dans un autre siecle, ou sous une autre loy. Ainsi encor que mon discours paroisse libre a ceux qui l'examinent par la maxime d'aujourd'huy, il est dans les termes honnestes et de la plus droite raison, et ne peut offenser que des esprits mal-faits et des ames grossieres qui ne peuvent se détacher de l'impression des sens, ny s'élever dans les desirs des meilleurs temps et des plus douces loix pour jouir de toutes les graces et de tous les honneurs de la raison libre.¹⁰

The next speaker is Aracie, who advances a very utilitarian theory. She wishes to limit the duration of marriage to the birth of the first child, after which the couple would separate, the father keeping the child and the wife regaining her liberty, receiving moreover as recompense from the father

quelque somme considerable et qui repondroit au merite de son ouvrage . . . La femme sterile seroit obligée pour sa punition de passer l'année toute entiere avec son mary; mais . . . celle qui seroit accouchée dans les neuf mois seroit avec honneur et avec eloge dispensée de la servitude des trois autres mois.¹¹

Yet another solution is put forward by Neossie, who suggests that the wife should share authority equally with her husband:

Je voudroi . . . que durant un mois ou un an. le mary fut le maistre; et que la femme pour autant de temps eut le droit d'exercer à son tour le mesme Empire, donner le nom, les armes aux enfans qui naistront en cette année de son exercise; que le mary fut sujet à estre autorisé par sa femme s'il voudroit contracter; enfin qu'elle eût le semblant de mary, et le mary le semblant de femme pendant mesme temps.¹²

It will be seen from the foregoing that the whole subject of the wife's position in marriage was one which keenly interested women in the XVIIth century, and that some of the solutions which they proposed were highly original and unconventional in the extreme. One must, of course, allow for the fact that this was a group of unusual women, and that it is possible that the abbé de Pure puts into the mouths of the various speakers ideas which are his own.

and are certainly not all intended to be taken seriously. The fact remains, however, that such ideas were undoubtedly in the air in the XVIIth century, were discussed in the *ruelles*, were published, and were read.

Among them were some theories which we are accustomed to consider as products of our own era. It is interesting to find, for example, that while campaigning for greater freedom within marriage and in the choice of a husband women of three hundred years ago touched upon the subject which is now called eugenics. This particular discussion forms part of a plea in favour of free love, the point being made that free love would contribute towards the betterment of the race:

De mesme si nos passions avoient toute leur espace. et que les divers objets qui les peuvent faire naistre, n'eussent pour bornes que l'indifférence ou la hayne, elles seroient bien plus fecondes et porteroient bien plus de fruit; mais non seulement la conservation, mais mesme la perfection de l'espece en est interrompue par ces ruineuses loix de l'Hyménée. Car enfin une femme qui a un mary mal fait, expose toute sa posterité à estre contrefaite, a faire toute une race heritiere des defauts de son auteur, et flestrie des disgraces de son ouvrier . . . Ce n'est pourtant pas le crime de ses yeux, ny de son coeur, car elle n'avoit jamais veu son Amant, elle n'en a pas fait choix. Ce pourroit estre celuy d'un parent avide, d'une friponne entre-metteuse, ou d'une nécessité de la mode et des temps. Mais il n'est rien de plus vray que c'est celuy du mariage qui non seulement engage au mal, mais encore exclud la possibilité de secours et du remede. Et de là viennent tous les desordres et toutes les alterations de l'espece; car si la liberté estoit restituée contre cet esclavage et cette servitude d'hymen, comme on auroit la liberté de choisir des bons ouvriers, il y auroit à esperer de n'avoir que de beaux ouvrages, et si par mal-heur nature reussissoit plus mal dans le fruit que dans la tige et ne répondoit aux soins de l'ouvrier, ny à la façon de l'ouvrage, la premiere faute se corrigeroit par un second essay; et ce seroit toûjours beaucoup ameliorer les conditions de l'espece d'en rendre les defauts reparables, et d'avoir toûjours des remedes prets et en estat de servir.¹³

Although these women of independent mind in the XVIIth century talked a great deal about lightening the yoke of marriage, and in the course of their discussions advocated some startling measures to achieve this, it was obvious that, without radically changing the whole structure of society, they had little hope of bringing about any of these reforms. Moreover their discussions

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were often of a purely academic nature—there is no evidence that they ever attempted to implement any of their wilder proposals. Nevertheless it is interesting to find that such views were being put forward, and that feminism had its place, albeit a very modest one, in the *Grand Siècle*.

NOTES

¹ *Artamène ou le Grand Cyrus*, Vol. X, Book II.

² *Ibid.*

³ *La Pretieuse* II, 274-276.

⁴ *Les Oeuvres de Mesdames des Roches de Poitiers mere et fille*. Paris, 1579 (2nd ed.) Ode 1.

⁵ Madame de la Suze was divorced from her husband. Women in the XVIIIth century could obtain a legal 'séparation de biens'. A 'séparation de corps' could be granted only upon proof of the husband's impotence.

⁶ *La Pretieuse* I, 280-281.

⁷ *La Pretieuse* II, 13-62. First Conversation: *Des Remedes aux Maux de Mariage*.

⁸ *Ibid.* 28.

⁹ *La Pretieuse* II, 34-37.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* 38.

¹¹ *Ibid.* 39 and 41.

¹² *Ibid.* 49.

¹³ *Ibid.* 238-9.

A SECOND ROYAIS

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THE first work of verse drama to be published in Australia was David Burn's *Plays and Fugitive Pieces, in Verse (and Prose)*. 2 volumes in one (Hobart Town, S. A. Tegg) 1842. It contains several tragedies but only the epilogue of one play, *The Bushrangers*, first performed at the Caledonian Theatre, Edinburgh, 1829.¹

Burn was a member of the Dramatic Authors' Society in England and at the time moved to and fro between Scotland and Tasmania. He is known to have edited *The South Briton or Tasmanian Literary Journal* in 1843.

The original lines and the heading of the epilogue to *The Bushrangers* were first printed in *The Scotsman*, Vol. 13 (September 12, 1829), p.593, col. 3, which adds that the graceful recitation was received with great applause. The epilogue justifies the author's choice of subject—bushranging in Tasmania—and the absence of a love-interest.

In the following year, Burn's epilogue to the lost play was reprinted in *The Tasmanian* (3/12/1830) but with the significant addition of four lines, lines again omitted in the 1842 collected volumes, *i.e.*

And then your fine Tasmania's done for ever,
All emigrants now flock to the Swan River—
True! fools, cried he, must always have their own way,
Pray heaven they find it not a second Boyais.

Dr Morris Miller drew my attention to the blurred initial capital B or R of *Boyais*, which I had no difficulty in identifying as *Royais*, and this again as a corrupt, anglicised form of *Rueil*, a town between Paris and Versailles. Probably the printer of Burn's MS. guessed at the initial capital of a name unknown to him.

Before discussing the meaning and origin of 'a second Royais', I quote the epilogue as giving a more detailed picture of Burn's intentions:—

Ladies and Gentlemen, I appeal to you!—
Why, Lud a mercy! what a silly elf!
Our Author's certainly beside himself!
Must he, to find materials for his play,

A Second Royais

Cross the South Seas, and rummage Botany Bay?
The man's invention must be mighty poor.
Else he'd in England find enough, I'm sure.
Without encroaching on the convict brood,
Who 'left their country for their country's good.'

What! not a word in it of love or *marriage*!
The thing will surely have a sad *miscarriage*!
The stupid creature! when 'tis all the fashion,
To poison—hang—or drown—for la belle passion.
And then I told him, it was quite the rage
To die for love, both off and on the stage.
Besides, I had a strong presentiment
The piece would ne'er go down without some sentiment.
Pho! 'Sentiment', says he, 'you foolish woman.
'There's no such silly trash in all Van Dieman.
'But let me whisper softly in your ear,
'If you should wish a husband, my sweet dear,
'In matrimony there's a sufficient trade
'To throw the Indian market into shade,
'And damsels who a partner meet would gain
'Will in Tasmania find their hopes not vain.'
So said the wretch, with most malicious leer.—
But I, with interest, repaid his sneer—
'Whatever fair one may become *your* wife,
'Will no doubt, be *transported all her life*!'
And then your fine Tasmania's done for ever.
All emigrants now flock to the Swan River—
True! fools, cried he, must always have their own way.
Pray heaven they find it not a second Royais.

But, gently my good tongue. I've come to plead
For our poor Author—shall his play succeed?
Will your good nature graciously excuse
This first production of his virgin muse?
Lo! where he sits with most lugubrious face.
I must, if possible avert disgrace—
I own he merits little from the fair,
But their forgiving hearts will kindly spare.
What say ye—*men*—great lords of the creation.
Shall the bold Bushrangers here take their station?
You'd best say—Aye!—lest ye should catch a tartar,
When once opposed, they rarely have shown quarter:
Where'er they went—they made themselves no strangers,
Then grant applause—and pardon The Bushrangers.

The place-name 'Rueil' occurs twice as 'Ruel' in Villon's *Le Grand Testament*. The first stanza of the *Belle Leçon de Villon aux Enfants Perduz* runs:

Beaulx enfans, vous perdez la plus
Belle rose de vo chappeau;
Mes clers pres prenans comme glus,
Se vous allez a Montpipeau
Ou à Ruel; gardez la peau:
Car, pour s'esbattre en ces deux lieux,
Cuydant que vaulsist le rappeau.
Le perdit Colin de Cayeuxl.

(*Le Grand Testament*, l. 1672, stanza 156.)

A neat English rendering is that by Lewis Wharton:

My lads, away that rose you'll fling
Which on your hat so fair doth blow;
You clerks, who tight as bird-lime cling
To what you take, at Montpipeau,
Or Rueil way with caution steal,
Since for a little fun out there
(Thinking it might be worth appeal)
Colin de Cayeuxl trod the air.²

The sombre warning to the Coquillards, Villon's disreputable companions, is repeated in the second Ballade of the Jargon:

Coquillars, arvens a Ruel,
Men ys vous chante que gardez
Que n'y laissez et corps et pel,
Com fist Colin le l'Escailler.

If they go to Rueil, they are bidden to listen to this song and take care they don't leave their skins there, as did Colin de Cayeuxl. The latter was officially described as 'a powerful operator of pick-locks'. He was hanged in 1460 for a 'frolic' (robbery with violence and rape) at Rueil, between Paris and St Germain; and for another 'frolic' of the same sort at Montpipeau.³

Paul Lacroix (*Oeuvres de François Villon*, p.159) thinks that 'Montpipeau' was Luciennes or Malmaison and adds, 'On se rappelle que Villon et ses compagnons avaient été poursuivis à cause d'un crime commis à Rueil ou aux environs. Ce crime était au moins un vol à main armée sur le grand chemin, puisqu'il entraînait la peine de mort du coupable'. Villon was as familiar with the Coquillards' ways of 'correcting' fortune as he was with their jargon.

A Second Royais

In first noting 'a second Royais',⁴ I accepted Studer and Waters' surmise that *aller à Rueil* was a slang term meaning to practise highway-robbery, and *aller à Montpipeau* to cheat at dice or cards.⁵ In the same preliminary discussion I gave, following E. F. Chaney,⁶ a reference to those terms found in René Guillon, a reference to which Professor A. R. Chisholm kindly also drew my attention more recently in a private letter from which I quote the relevant information:

Re-reading this week a small book by René Guillon on the *Ballades en jargon* (Neuphilologische Bibliothek, Groningen, 1920) I came across this in K. Sneyders de Vogel's Avant-propos:—'deux vers de Villon, qu'on avait toujours mal interprétés:

Si vous allez a Montpipeau

Ou a Rueil, gardez la peau.

(Guillon, says K. S. de Vogel, wrote in *Romania*, XLIII, p.102 et seq. Rapprochant ces noms de *Reul* et *Montpipeau* des termes de l'argot des Coquillards ou du jargon de Villon *ruer* et *piper*, je me demande si *aller à Ruel*, *aller à Montpipeau* ne sont pas des périphrases pour *ruer* et *piper*, par un calembour analogue à celui qui plus tard fit dire *aller à Niort* pour *nier*.)

Guillon's valuable suggestions of periphrasis can be accepted as euphemisms, just as Villon's *s'esbattre* is a euphemism, like *s'amuser*, an ironic touch which Théophile Gautier had also noted, for 'fun' that included highway-robbery and *piperies* (cf. *pipeur*, *pipou*, cheat, trickster). Gautier had a keen eye for the grotesque in Villon, who 's'érige en donneur de conseil et fait le moraliste', and whose comrades Colin de Gayeux et René de Montigny 'avaient eu la maladresse de se laisser mourir longitudinalement'.

However, David Burn's use of *Royais* points to *Rueil*, perhaps without our bringing in *ruer*, common enough as this was in the sense of 'jeter avec précipitation', 'rush', 'assault' (cf. E. *roué*, 'debauchee'). Burn's context leads one undoubtedly to suppose that 'a second Royais' meant a neighbourhood where travellers were in danger of being robbed by highway-men. Unlike the euphemistic *aller à Rouen* ('to get ruined') present day slang has apparently discarded *aller à Rueil* in its two figurative meanings—to take highway robbery or to risk being robbed. What is remarkable is that an expression dating back to Villon should have survived in early Scottish-Tasmanian speech more than three centuries later.—Where did Burn get it from?

NOTES

¹ E. Morris Miller, *Australian Literature from its Beginnings to 1935*, i, 375, Melbourne University Press, 1940.

² *The Poems of Villon*, p.III, Dent, 1935.

³ D. Wyndham Lewis, *François Villon—A Documented Survey*, p.70 ff., London, 1928.

⁴ *Meanjin*, 1950, No. 2.

⁵ *Historical French Reader*, p.449, Clarendon Pr., 1924.

⁶ *The Poems of François Villon*, p.169, Blackwell, 1941.

THE DIRECT METHOD EXPERIMENT
IN THE TEACHING OF FRENCH IN
NEW SOUTH WALES, 1903-1926

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THE period 1903-1926 is a most interesting one in the history of the teaching of French in New South Wales in the schools, at Sydney Teachers' College and at the University of Sydney. French, which had hitherto been taught in the highest classes of the state primary schools, became a purely secondary subject, taught widely in the ever-increasing number of state high and private schools which prepared students for the Public Examinations. At the University, the Department of French, under Mr (later Professor) G. G. Nicholson, became an independent department, no longer attached to the Department of Modern Literature, and reached a high academic standard, while at Teachers' College an intensive course for the training of teachers was developed. The most interesting feature of the period, however, was the teaching of French as a living language and the attempt at some levels to teach solely by the direct method. The experiment reached its peak about 1920, and was abandoned in 1926, although several of its features were retained. The New South Wales movement was initiated by a few outstanding individuals who had come under the direct influence of the Reform Movement in the teaching of modern languages in the German States, France and Great Britain, and all the latest literature on reformed methods of teaching was available to their

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students. Moreover the movement in the Teachers' College and schools had the official approval of the Director of Education, Mr Peter Board, who had been impressed by the teaching of languages in German schools, and it was in line with the recommendations of Messrs Knibbs and Turner in their report on secondary education, published in 1904, after they had visited schools in many European countries.¹ The changes in New South Wales were carried out simultaneously at the University, Teachers' College, and in the schools.

The first four Readers or Lecturers in French at the University of Sydney were native speakers. Little is known of what or how they taught, but we may assume from various statements made in the Senate and by the first Professor of Modern Literature, Professor Mungo MacCallum, that the French course was of an elementary, practical nature. Thus the Senate resolved on 10th December, 1884, 'that from 1st January, 1886 the teaching of elementary French and German in the University shall be discontinued', and Professor MacCallum, in a letter to the Senate on 19th December, 1887, foreshadowing important changes in the Department of Modern Literature, announced that 'the study of Modern Languages will be more philological and literary, and less purely practical'. MacCallum's views are expressed further in a report to the Senate on 19th March 1888: 'If a student wishes knowledge of a colloquial or mercantile kind, he should go to a private teacher'. A three years' French course, including a study of prescribed texts, prose composition, unseen translation, literature and philology, was developed, with no dictation, phonetics, reading aloud or conversation. One of the students who pursued these studies (1897-1899) was Mr Nicholson, who completed a brilliant course in French and German by winning the James King of Irrawang Travelling Scholarship, and proceeded to Oxford, Berlin and Paris. In 1903 he was appointed as Assistant Lecturer in Modern Literature and he began to introduce changes gradually into the University course of French and to advocate changes in the method of teaching in the schools. His views are best understood by consulting a 'Note on the Teaching of Modern Foreign Languages in the Schools of New South Wales' which he submitted to the University Senate on 11th December, 1909. He explains the modern aims of language teaching by quoting 'official regulations issued in Prussia 15 years ago': 'The direct object of instruction in foreign languages is to enable the pupils to understand foreign authors and to comprehend spoken French and German, also to use with a certain fluency the simple forms of daily intercourse both orally and in writing. Its indirect object is to open up to the

pupils' minds, as far as possible, the culture and civilization, the life and customs of a foreign nation. *The first aim is the acquisition of a correct pronunciation by careful systematic practice of the foreign sounds . . .* The conversational practice, on which stress is to be laid from the very first day, is to be carried on partly in connection with the reading lessons, partly with concrete objects, events of school life, and pictures of scenes from daily life'. Nicholson goes on to say that the teacher must 'use the language with the utmost ease and precision' and should therefore be trained in phonetics. He had already introduced dictation into the University course (1903), courses in literature were now being given in the foreign language, and from 1910 he proposed to make phonetics an integral part of the course, and to prevent students from graduating with honours if they failed to satisfy a conversational test. When free composition and dictation is introduced into the Senior and Junior Public Examinations, he concludes, 'the University then cannot fairly be charged with fostering the "dumb study" of foreign languages'. It is interesting to note that Nicholson introduced his changes gradually. Although dictation was introduced immediately into the University courses, it was not until 1910 that a dictation test was imposed on matriculants intending to join these courses, and he delayed the introduction of phonetics until the same year, seven years after his return from abroad, although he was an ardent advocate of training in phonetics—his book, *Practical Introduction to French Phonetics* was the first text on phonetics published in Australia. From 1910 to the outbreak of the First World War Sydney graduates in French were appointed as 'assistants' in French schools, and in 1921 Nicholson was able to persuade the French government to found two scholarships for study in France, on condition that the government of New South Wales provided additional funds. The first of these scholarships was awarded in 1926. From 1922 Nicholson had the services of a native speaker on his staff. In spite of the oral emphasis placed on the study of French, it cannot be said that Nicholson adopted the direct method in its entirety; indeed he stated in a speech to the Modern Language Section of the Secondary Teachers of New South Wales: 'I have resolutely withstood the eccentricities of the Direct Methodists'.² Nevertheless, as well as raising French literary and philological studies to a high standard during his long professorship (1920-1944), Nicholson demanded also a high standard of spoken French and of comprehension of the spoken language from his students.

The direct method experiment was carried further at Teachers' College. There the Lecturer in French until 1912 was Mr T. T. Roberts, who taught both French and Method of French. Until

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1908 it was compulsory for all students at the College to take French for two years, and the course included dictation and phonetics. In 1909 French became optional, and the course included practice in conversation, talks in French on objects, and regular tests in dictation. Roberts, who had seen modern language teaching by the reformed method in Germany and France recommended that his method students should read books by the leaders of the Reform Movement such as Breul and Kirkman, and the English Board of Education special reports on the teaching of languages in Germany. He himself suggests a method suitable for adoption in Australian schools in an article in the *Records of the Education Society*. Whereas the old method was based on the teaching of the classics, the teacher must now have a colloquial, as well as a literary command of the language, and should therefore have a period of residence abroad. The aim was now to create a sympathy for the foreign people, and the ability and the desire to read, write and speak. 'The ability to speak and understand', he continues, 'is not in itself of vital importance in Australia, but reacts powerfully upon the other branches of instruction'.³ This is the first time that this important claim, made subsequently by advocates of oral work in foreign languages in Australia, where the practical uses of oral French are limited, appears in print in articles published in New South Wales on educational practice and theory. Turning to practical details, Roberts advocates for beginners in French a short preliminary course in sounds, and much use of the foreign language by means of dictation, songs, poems, lessons on objects, pictures and maps. In higher forms, texts should not always be translated, but comprehended by means of definitions, questions, association, gesture and context. In addition history and geography lessons might be given, and 'oral (sic) compositions' are recommended.

Upon the promotion of Roberts to Vice-Principal of Teachers' College in 1912, Mr (later Professor) E. G. Waterhouse was invited by the Director of Education, Mr Board, to apply for the post of Senior Lecturer in Modern Languages at the College. Waterhouse, who had studied at the Tilley Institute in Berlin and under Professor Paul Passy in Paris, had been teaching French and German by the direct method at Sydney Grammar School since his return from abroad in 1908. At the College he developed the most intensive courses for the training of teachers of modern languages that have ever been given in Australia. Students who had obtained Leaving French or who were studying French at the University took a three-year course, at the end of which they were awarded a certificate of competency in the teaching of French. The course consisted of conversation, phonetics, dictation and an optional

literature course in first year; of conversation, phonetics, methodology and demonstration lessons in second year; and of conversation, phonetics, teaching practice and exercises in the third year. In 1918 a fourth year was added for graduates, who had conversation twice weekly, lectures and 'causeries' in French, lectures on French life and institutions, teaching exercises, observation and practice, and had to submit a short thesis, on some aspect of modern language teaching. Experimental classes, five in all, were conducted at Sydney Boys' and Sydney Girls' High Schools by the French teachers in consultation with Mr Waterhouse. The series of lessons given to a first-year class was published under the title: 'The Initial Stage in French by the Direct Method' by Snowden and Waterhouse, and it soon became a text book recommended for junior forms by the Department of Education. By 1921 Mr Waterhouse, together with two assistant lecturers and two native speakers, had added prose composition to the syllabus of the three-year course, and was giving no less than fifteen hours weekly tuition in French and method to the graduate students. Outstanding features of this course were each week four hours' conversation, three hours' phonetics, two hours' fluency and reading exercises, and one hour lecture in French by French residents of Sydney. After his appointment as Associate Professor of German at the University, Waterhouse continued this work at the College for some time, but was replaced in 1926 by Mr Peter Murphy, whose interests were primarily linguistic, and who abandoned the intensive direct method courses. Professor Waterhouse and a few of the students who took this course whom I have met speak of the enthusiasm of many of the students, particularly the honours graduates, and of the vitality in the experimental classes and the very good results obtained. They agree, however, that the less gifted linguistically found the method difficult themselves, and difficult to apply if they were posted to country schools. This, and the high failure rate at the Public Examinations, no doubt contributed to the abandonment of the experiment.

Meanwhile changes in the Intermediate and Leaving French papers had been made to cater for candidates taught by the direct method. In 1916 alternative examination papers were set at Intermediate and Leaving level, while sufficient choice was given in the Leaving Honours paper to cater for candidates taught by either method. The formal, grammar-translation method of teaching was henceforth called the 'older method'. As was essential when an important change was introduced, teachers were given detailed help in the Courses of Study issued by the Department of Education. They were advised not to confine themselves exclusively

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to one method only; for example, free composition and dictation were recommended as useful to candidates prepared on the older method—here we surely see the infiltration of part of the direct method into the older method. An idea of methods of teaching and of the expected standard can be best obtained from a study of examination papers. The Intermediate examination for 1918 for direct method students consisted of three questions—comprehension, free composition and grammar. The comprehension question is, by modern standards, extremely difficult. Answers to the questions set on it had to be given in French and, moreover, required not only an understanding of the passage, but definition of words and phrases, synonyms, vocabulary allied to words in the text and the candidates' own opinions of events or persons mentioned. There was no choice in the free composition question, and a plan of what was required was sketched out for the students. The third question contained the usual grammatical oddments such as 'turn into the negative', and 'replace nouns by pronouns'. 15% of the total mark was allotted to a dictation, and 15% to reading aloud. The oral tests were given by a team of examiners, including native speakers. The Leaving direct method paper contained a composition of two pages' length, comprehension and grammar. The comprehension question examined not only understanding of written French but grammatical knowledge ('Quels sont les autres substantifs terminés en -eur qui sont du genre masculin?') and background knowledge ('Qu'est-ce que vous savez de la Bretagne?', 'Que sont les Champs-Élysées?'). The setting of alternative papers ceased in 1926; examination once again became the formal, grammar-translation type, although an optional dictation and reading test was retained, and a questionnaire (questions in French to be answered in French) was introduced.

The official reason for the discontinuance of the experiment was the low pass rate in French compared with other subjects. In 1918 the examiners stated that numbers of students took the direct method paper without any genuine direct method training, and many schools were advised to give up the direct method until they could attract a staff of specially qualified teachers possessing first-hand experience of the foreign language.⁴ In 1919 the examiners' reports were again very severe, and they expressed the fear that so much of the so-called direct method 'was rather of a dilettante nature and does not get down to essentials.' It must be noted, however, that the failure rate in French had been very high before the advent of the alternative papers; 43% of the candidates had passed Leaving French in 1914, compared with 56% in 1918. Looking back today on these papers, I would say that the standard

required from those who had completed three or four years' study of French was excessively high, and that the papers were excessively long. In spite of the intensive teacher-training course, teaching by the direct method must have been very difficult for those who had not lived abroad, however great their initial enthusiasm. Teachers are bound to be uncertain at the beginning of so radical an experiment, and it may well be that it was launched without adequate teacher-preparation over a sufficient number of years. Add to this the resignation of Professor Waterhouse, the initiator of the scheme, from the Teachers' College, the belief of Professor Nicholson that grammar and syntax and prose translation were not best taught by the direct method, and the growing belief among certain teachers that the reading aim was paramount in Australian schools,⁶ and it is easy to see why the experiment was abandoned. It was in fact part of the world-wide waning of enthusiasm for the Reform Movement. The New South Wales experiment, though short-lived, left its mark on the teaching of French at all levels. Oral work remained an important part of the University course, and was continued in some schools and by some teachers.

NOTES

¹ *Report of Commissioners, mainly on Secondary Education 1904*, pp.6-7. (Government Printer).

² *Education—The Organ of the New South Wales Public Schools Teachers' Federation*, Vol. IX, No. 12, 15th October, 1928, p.405. (Government Printer).

³ *Records of the Education Society*, No. 4, 1910, p.5. (Government Printer).

⁴ *Official Handbook of Leaving and Intermediate Certificate Examinations*, 1918, p.252. (Government Printer).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 1919, p.291.

⁶ 'Two Sources of Waste in the Teaching of French', a series of articles in *Schooling*, Vol. XI, No. 3, Vol. XII, Nos. 1, 2, 3, 4. (Teachers' College Press).

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CONTRIBUTIONS TO PERIODICALS

- Professor Chisholm has contributed at frequent intervals to many periodicals: *The Modern Language Review of New South Wales* (1920-21), *The French Quarterly* (1928-31), *The Modern Language Review*, *The Australian Quarterly*, *Meanjin*, etc. Special reference should be made to the following important articles:
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'La Fortune du Symbolisme français en Australie', *Mercure de France*, September 1949.
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'Mallarmé: Ses purs ongles—', *French Studies*, July, 1952.
'A Working Exegesis of Mallarmé's "Coup de dés",' *AUMLA*, Vol. 1, No. 2.
'Three Difficult Sonnets by Mallarmé', *French Studies*, July, 1955.
'Mallarmé's "Sainte": An Epitome of Symbolism', *AUMLA*, Vol. 3, No. 1.

NOTE

Owing to the requirements of this number, the usual book reviews and Association news are being held over until *AUMLA* No. 11.

